Transformational Empowerment of Adolescent Marginalised Girls in Malawi – Midline Evaluation Report

August 2022

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List of acronyms

AoC	Agent of Change
CBE	Complementary Basic Education Centre
CERT	Centre for Educational Research and Training
CP	Child Protection
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
FCDO	United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEC	Girls' Education Challenge
GRPICCT	Gender Responsive Pedagogy & Inclusive and Child-centred Teaching Methodologies
IO	Intermediate Outcome
KII	Key Informant Interview
Link	Link Education International
LNGB	Leave No Girl Behind
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoGCDSW	Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare
O	Outcome
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STS	School-to-School International
TALULAR	Teaching And Learning Using Locally Available Resources
TEAM Girl Malawi	Transformational Empowerment of Adolescent Marginalised Girls in Malawi
TfaC	Theatre for a Change
ToC	Theory of Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VACS	Violence Against Children Survey

1. Cover sheet

- Name of project: Transformational Empowerment for Adolescent Marginalised Girls in Malawi (TEAM Girl Malawi)
- Names of Authors: Carol da Silva, Anne Laesecke, Matthew Murray, Daniel Salicath, Erica Wang
- Name of external evaluation firm: School-to-School International
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Project Evaluation Report

Report title:	Transformational Empowerment of Adolescent Marginalised Girls in Malawi – Midline Evaluation Report
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Notes:

Some annexes listed in the contents page of this document have not been included because of challenges with capturing them as an A4 PDF document or because they are documents intended for programme purposes only. If you would like access to any of these annexes, please enquire about their availability by emailing uk_girls_education_challenge@pwc.com.

Girls' Education Challenge

UKaid from the British people

2. Executive summary

Background

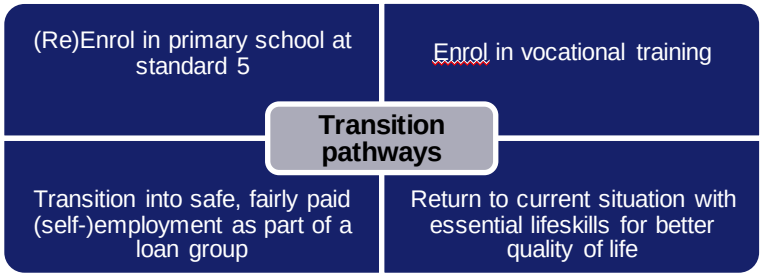
The Transformational Empowerment for Adolescent Marginalised Girls in Malawi (TEAM Girl Malawi) project is a 5-year Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) initiative funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) through the Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB) funding window. TEAM Girl Malawi is implemented by Link Education International (Link) and Link Community Development Malawi (Link Malawi) in collaboration with consortium partners Theatre for a Change (TfaC), CGA Technologies, Supreme and CUMO Microfinance Limited.

Seeking to improve learning and life opportunities for girls aged 10–19 who have never been to school or who dropped out of school without gaining functional literacy and numeracy skills, the project is implementing activities in 4 key intervention areas:

1. Community-based complementary basic education centres (CBEs)
2. Girls' Clubs located in the same space as CBEs
3. Support for transition into primary school, vocational training and business training supported by micro-loans located in select communities
4. Support to families, community members and government staff

The project expects to reach three cohorts of girls who will transition into one of 4 pathways (Figure 1).[1]

Figure 1: TEAM Girl Malawi transition pathways



TEAM Girl Malawi developed a theory of change (ToC) that articulates the specific barriers faced by marginalised girls in Malawi. The ToC also proposes activities, outputs and outcomes that will achieve the project's desired impact.

The project's ToC considers the multiple and intersecting barriers that prevent highly marginalised girls from accessing quality education in Malawi. These barriers are categorised under social marginalisation, economic marginalisation and educational marginalisation. The project's ToC proposes a set of activities implemented by TEAM Girl Malawi's consortium partners to address these barriers directly. As a result of these activities, TEAM Girl Malawi anticipates 5 outputs:

1. The CBEs are high quality, inclusive and gender-responsive

[1] This midline reports on the pathways selected by girls finishing their time in the project (Cohort 1) and girls just beginning their time in the project (Cohort 3). It tracks selection into three of the four transition pathways; it does not report on whether girls have opted to return to their current situation with essential lifeskills for better quality of life, although it does report on changes in lifeskills overall.

2. Girls are empowered with improved awareness around sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as well as social and emotional knowledge, attitudes, and skills

3. Leadership at the national, district and local levels is improved to support the education of marginalised girls

4. Marginalised girls are safe, supported and protected

5. Girls and their carers have skills so that they can earn

Building on these outputs, TEAM Girl Malawi expects to observe 4 intermediate outcomes (IOs), including:[2]

1. Improved attendance at CBEs, Girls' Clubs and vocational and business training programmes

2. Improved quality of education at CBEs, primary schools and Girls' Clubs

3. Improvement in community members' understanding and use of support mechanisms for marginalised girls

4. Strengthened district- and national-level leadership and engagement in marginalised adolescent girls' education

All activities, outputs and IOs lead to the 3 core outcomes of TEAM Girl Malawi:

1. Learning: (i) marginalised girls are supported by the project to improve their literacy and numeracy outcomes, (ii) marginalised girls are supported with improved life skills outcomes, including sexual and reproductive health, self-esteem and self-confidence

2. Transition: highly marginalised girls transition into either primary school, vocational training programmes or business training programmes/entrepreneurship

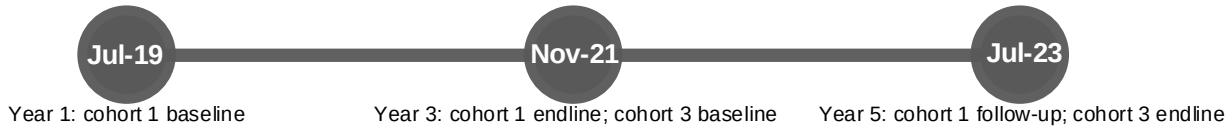
3. Sustainability: (i) the Ministry of Education adopts and runs an inclusive model of complementary basic education that reaches the most marginalised, (ii) commitment and capacity to implement evidence-based school improvement planning (school review) that supports the education of marginalised girls, embedded at local, district and national level, (iii) commitment and capacity to implement evidence-based school improvement planning that supports the education of marginalised girls, embedded at local, district and national level, (iv) communities and government district stakeholders recognise, report and respond to child abuse

Approach

The evaluation of the TEAM Girl Malawi project employs a mixed-methods, longitudinal, quasi-experimental design. The evaluation utilises data from learning assessments, a package of quantitative and qualitative instruments and ongoing project monitoring tools. The tools, respondents and data collection methods allow data to be triangulated and linked across evaluation questions and indicators. Evaluation data will be collected at 3 time points (Figure 2).

[2] Between baseline and midline, the project reviewed the statement of its intermediate outcomes and adapted them slightly based upon knowledge gained through project implementation.

Figure 2: Project evaluation points and cohorts



This report summarises findings from quantitative midline data that was collected in 25 CBEs in November 2021 and from qualitative data collected from 4 CBEs in January 2022 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Midline target sample sizes

Conclusions

Summary midline conclusions and the appropriateness of project interventions are described below.

- Midline data analyses shows that Cohort 1 girls demonstrated an overall improvement in literacy, as measured by the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA).[3] The percentage of girls who improved their aggregated EGRA score between baseline and midline is 88% (Indicator 1.1). The mean aggregate for EGRA scores improved from 17.9 at baseline (out of 100) to 38.2 at midline. These positive trends are exceptionally notable, particularly considering the additional challenges participating girls faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Midline data analyses shows that Cohort 1 girls also demonstrated an overall improvement in numeracy, as measured by the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA). Overall, 85.9% of girls improved their aggregate numeracy score from baseline to the midline. At baseline, the mean aggregate score was 33.5 (out of 100). This improved to 56.6 at the midline.

- In keeping with the project design, there appears to be a trend in the selection of transition pathways by age.[4] Younger girls more frequently selected transitioning to primary school re-enrolment (transition pathway A), and older girls chose transitioning to skills or vocational training (transition pathway B) or entrepreneurship/employment (transition pathway C).For younger girls, this selection was largely due to guidance provided by the project, which focused their pathways options on returning to primary school. In contrast, older girls were offered the

[3] In this midline report, Cohort 1 girls have already completed the TEAM Girl Malawi programme and chosen a transition pathway; Cohort 3 girls are beginning the programme and are reporting on a predicted pathway for the future.

[4] The intervention examined girls' transition into one of three pathways: transition A (pathway to primary school); transition B (pathway to skills or vocational training); and transition C (pathway to entrepreneurship or employment). At midline, girls in Cohort 1 have completed the selection of their pathway and have started that pathway. Girls in Cohort 3, who are just beginning to participate in the intervention, have declared their *intended* pathway but not yet started on that pathway.

opportunity to select any of the pathways. These trends align with TEAM Girl Malawi transition pathways, which anticipate that girls aged 10-15 at the end of CBE will transition into the formal school system.

- Some statistically significant differences in learning outcomes by transition subgroup were identified within Cohort 3, for whom this data collection serves as a baseline. In Cohort 1, there were no statistically significant differences on learning outcomes in either literacy or numeracy among transition subgroups. In contrast, in Cohort 3, it was found that those planning to transition to primary school had significantly lower mean EGRA and EGMA scores than those that were planning to transition to vocational training or entrepreneurship/employment. This indicates that, in Cohort 3, girls who expressed a preference to transition into vocational training, entrepreneurship or employment at the end of the project had higher learning outcome scores than girls who expressed a preference to transition to primary education. This trend also seems likely related to the ages of girls choosing different transition pathways, as mentioned previously.

- Overall, the majority of Cohort 1 girls indicated that they would pursue skills or vocational training (45.2%) or self-employment (42.9%) at the end of the project. Cohort 1 girls in Lilongwe were statistically significantly more likely to select 're-enrolling in school' than were girls in the other two districts. Girls in Dedza and Mchinji were significantly more likely to select 'self-employment' than were girls in Lilongwe.

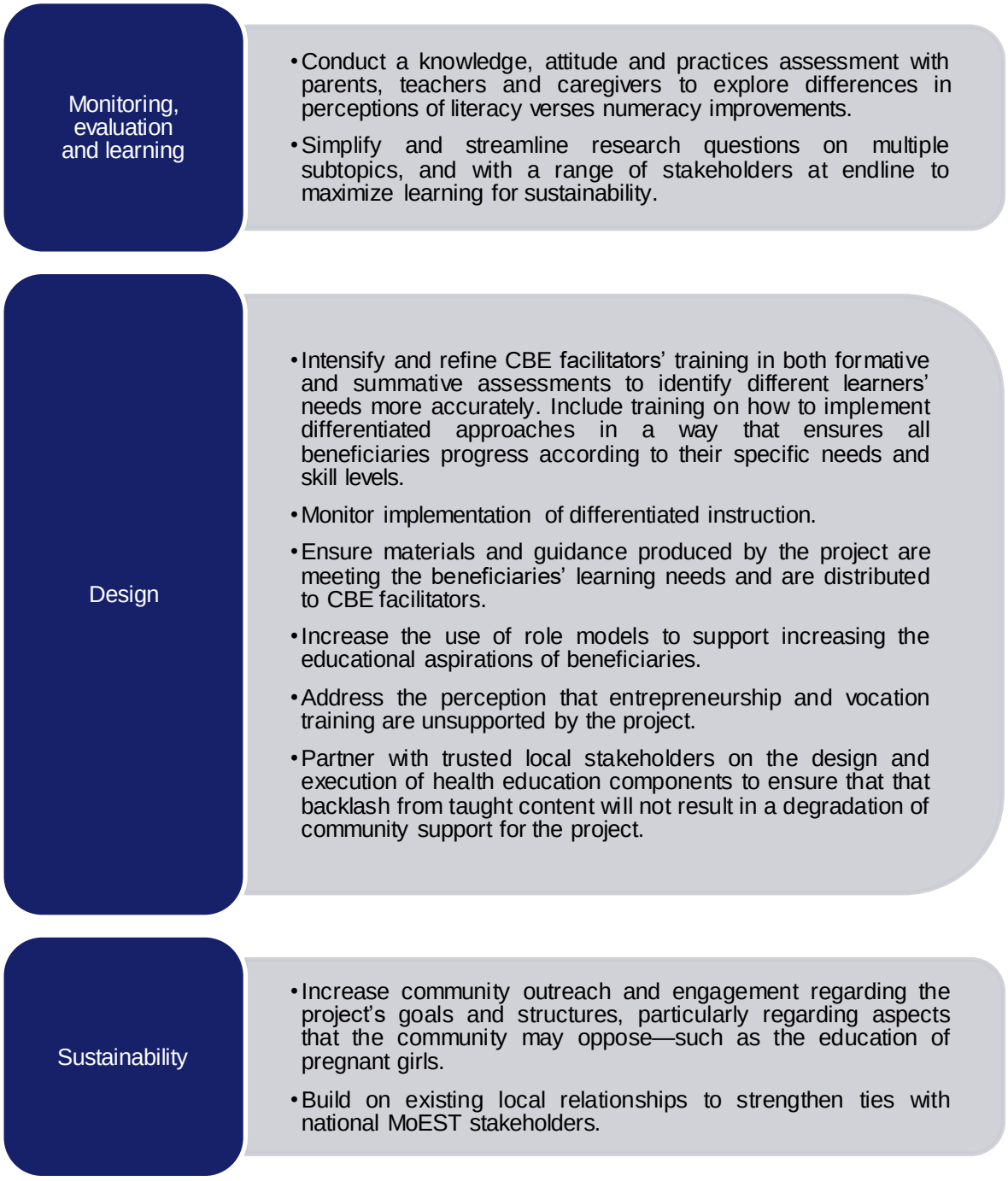
- The majority (80% or higher) of Cohort 1 girls reported improved life skills. However, the same age-related trend seen in transition pathway selection was also identified in life skills outcomes—a lower proportion of girls in the younger age groups showed improved scores on the life skills measure as compared to the proportion of girls in the older age groups.

- The project seems to have had a marked impact on facilitators' capacity to practise gender-responsive pedagogy & inclusive and child-centred teaching methodologies (GRPICCT), with both midline and internal project data finding a majority of facilitators applying at least some of these methodologies.

- **Recommendations**

Midline recommendations are summarised in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Summary of midline recommendations



1. Background to project

The Transformational Empowerment for Adolescent Marginalised Girls in Malawi (TEAM Girl Malawi) project is a 5-year Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)-funded Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) initiative through the Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB) funding window. Link Education International (Link) implements TEAM Girl Malawi in collaboration with consortium partners Theatre for a Change (TfaC), CGA Technologies, Supreme and CUMO Microfinance. School-to-School International (STS) serves as the external evaluator for TEAM Girl Malawi.

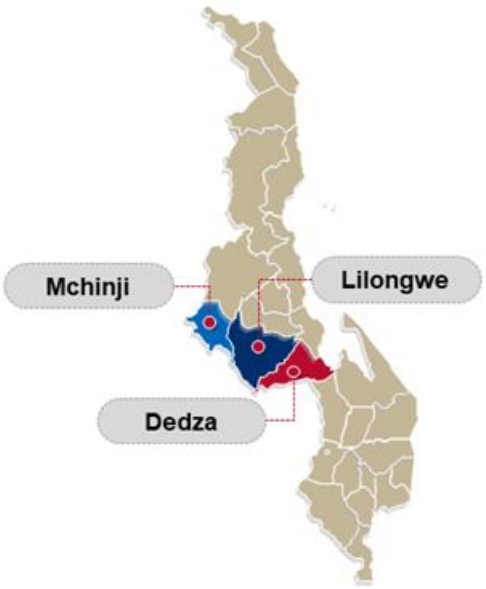
1.1 Project context, target beneficiary groups and theory of change

Context for programme design

Politically, Malawi is stable. However, rising inflation, corruption, inequality and climate change leave 73.5% of people living under the international poverty line (World Bank, 2022), and the country ranked 174 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index 2020. The Ministry of Education (MoEST) has inadequate funding and capacity, and at the programme's onset the 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Review indicated the country would not reach its education targets. Malawi continues to be dominated by traditional authorities' bylaws that often conflict with national laws, particularly around child-safeguarding issues.

Malawi has experienced widespread drought and flooding in recent years, leading to more than 50% of people experiencing food shortages. Adults and children living in poor or rural conditions are particularly vulnerable to climate-related shocks. Health care is weak—11% of the adult population is HIV positive (Ministry of Health 2016). The epidemic, combined with shortages of medical supplies, plays a strong role in the country's low life expectancy of 57 years for men and 60 years for women (WHO 2015).

Figure 5: Map of TEAM Girl Malawi impact region



Traditional socio-cultural expectations place significant barriers on the ability of girls living in poverty to succeed educationally and economically. A 2016 UNICEF study found that 46% of girls marry and 35% give birth before the age of 18. Additionally, 20% of girls experience sexual violence; exploitation and abuse remain accepted norms (Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2015). Less than half (47%) of girls complete primary education, compared with 56% of boys (EMIS 2015). The child protection (CP) system is under-resourced and weak.

In the Central Western Region of Malawi, where TEAM Girl Malawi operates, there are above average rates of girls' dropout, standards repetition, orphans and child-headed households (EMIS 2015). Dedza's education system is overstretched due to the migration of children from Mozambique (NESP 2008–2017). Mchinji has a

chronic lack of teachers and almost no provision for learners with special needs (NESP). In Lilongwe, there is an elevated risk of trafficking and sexual exploitation. The TEAM Girl Malawi project responds to the reality of this context.

A gender and social inclusion analysis informed TEAM Girl Malawi's project design and theory of change (ToC). It also identified multiple and intersecting barriers that prevent highly marginalised girls from accessing quality education. The project includes social, economic and educational marginalisation in its programming.

Social marginalisation

- Early and forced marriage of girls is culturally accepted and provides income for poor families. It is rare for married girls to remain in school.
- Deeply ingrained attitudes denigrate girls' education as low value with little positive return. There remains a prioritisation of boys' education, heightened by the fact that girls are expected to take on more household chores and care responsibilities.
- Teenage pregnancy is common, and increasing, both for married and unmarried girls. Whilst the Readmission Policy is implemented in the target districts, girls report childcare challenges, poverty, stigma and feeling 'too old' for school as reasons for dropping out. School records show that young fathers are less likely to drop out.
- Gender-based violence and child abuse are normalised and common in school and community environments. CP systems are weak. According to one study, 24% of children have experienced multiple forms of violence. Boys are more likely to experience physical violence while girls experience sexual violence (2013 VACS). Adolescent girls report feeling unsafe travelling to school.
- Malawi is a conservative country, and adolescents who experience stigma from disability, HIV status, mental health, albinism or sexual exploitation are particularly marginalised. This is compounded by poor access to health services and that few schools provide an inclusive, safe environment. Girls remain at high risk of HIV—3.7% of young women aged 15–17 live with HIV compared to 0.4% of boys (MoH 2014).

Economic marginalisation

- Whilst primary school is free, families who suffer poverty cannot afford essential additional costs—books, uniforms, exam fees. They also rely on income from child labour. This is particularly true for child-headed households and among orphans.
- Adolescent girls are at risk of sexual exploitation for income generation and internal and external trafficking. It is challenging for a sexually exploited girl to return to school, particularly if contributing to the household income.
- In Lilongwe, there are additional challenges of dense urban living. The majority of the population lives in urban areas and in informal settlements. The UN reported that the average population density in Lilongwe is 1,479 per square kilometre.[5]

Educational marginalisation

- Primary schools are under-resourced, and teachers are unable to provide marginalised children with individual attention and support. Gender norms mean that

[5] Malawi - The World Factbook (cia.gov); Malawi Lilongwe Urban Profile.pdf (unhabitat.org)

girls participate less than boys, which impacts their self-confidence as well as their ability to progress. In addition to this, girls' learning is restricted by pedagogy that is not gender responsive. Primary schools are rarely equipped with separate sanitation facilities for girls and do not meet their needs during menstruation.

- Adolescent girls are reluctant to re-join classes with younger children or where the pedagogy is inappropriate for their age.
- Despite a government policy to make available alternative forms of education for marginalised, vulnerable or over-age children, Malawi's provision of complementary basic education centres (CBE) could benefit from additional support to achieve systematic implementation.
- Most (59%) of the primary school teachers are male (EMIS 2015). Girls lack role models in the education sector, which becomes particularly challenging as they negotiate puberty and socio-cultural expectations.
- Low parental-literacy levels, particularly among women, and few educational resources prevent children from accessing educational support at home.

Direct beneficiaries of the TEAM Girl Malawi project are defined as 'individuals who are the intended, targeted beneficiaries of the interventions'. Beneficiary selection for direct beneficiaries used eligibility criteria that learners had to meet: (i) be out of school, (ii) be 10–19 years old and (iii) have no functional literacy or numeracy skills. TEAM Girl Malawi specifically designed interventions to meet the needs of direct beneficiaries, support their vulnerabilities, tackle the barriers they face in obtaining basic levels of literacy and numeracy and equip them to access sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), choice and safety. At the conclusion of CBE, direct beneficiaries were encouraged to transition to primary school, vocational training or business training, based on their age (see Table 1).

Table 1: Proposed intervention pathways after successful CBE completion

Intervention pathway	Which girls are recommended to follow this pathway?	What literacy and numeracy levels are the girls starting at?	What does success look like for learning?	What does success look like for transition?
Enrol back into primary school (standard 5) (Transition group A)	Girls aged 10–15 at end of 2 years of CBE	Standard 0 – 1 for literacy and numeracy	Girls achieve standard 4 equivalent for literacy and numeracy	Girls enrol back into school (standard 5) and continue learning
Embark on supported vocational training course (Transition group B)	Girls aged 16–21 at end of 2 years of CBE			Girls obtain skills to enter safe employment[6]
Enter entrepreneurship	Girls aged 18–19+ at end of 2			Girls repay loan and continue

[6] Measure for "obtain skills" will be determined jointly with programme implementers

Intervention pathway	Which girls are recommended to follow this pathway?	What literacy and numeracy levels are the girls starting at?	What does success look like for learning?	What does success look like for transition?
training (Transition group C)[7]	years of CBE			with business earning[8]

Indirect beneficiaries of the TEAM Girl Malawi project are defined as those 'individuals who are unintended targets but likely to benefit from the intervention'. Indirect beneficiaries of TEAM Girl Malawi include boys, CBE facilitators and others (see Table 2).

Table 2: Indirect beneficiary groups

Group	Interventions received
Boys[9]	CBE curriculum, Girls' Clubs, safeguarding, transition
CBE facilitators, AoCs	Extensive training and job experience
Wider community members	Community sensitisation through listening clubs and trainings on numerous issues, such as child protection, inclusive education, stigmatisation and safeguarding
Family members of direct beneficiaries	Household economic benefit of vocational training, business training and loans
District officials, including PEAs and teachers	Inclusion training in schools and capacity building

2. Midline evaluation approach and methodology

The following section presents information on the midline evaluation approach, including details on the overall evaluation purpose and questions, quantitative and qualitative methodologies, data collection tools, enumerator training and operational midline data collection. External evaluators conducted the TEAM Girl Malawi midline evaluation: STS and a local data collection firm, the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT) at the University of Malawi.

2.1 Evaluation purposes and evaluation questions

The overall purpose of the midline evaluation of TEAM Girl Malawi is to test assumptions that underpin the project's ToC. In other words, the midline evaluation is designed to provide relevant, meaningful and credible findings about the design of the project and its ability to meet its proposed outcomes in relation to IOs stated in the ToC.

TEAM Girl Malawi's primary and sub-evaluation questions and data sources are detailed in Table 3. Four project-level evaluation questions guide all LNGB projects; the project-specific sub-evaluation questions further specify these. The sub-evaluation questions align with TEAM Girl Malawi's ToC and measure the implementation assumptions the project was

[7] Group C includes girls who do entrepreneurship training, plus those who also join a VSL group, plus those who received a microloan. Girls can do entrepreneurship training at age 16 but are only eligible for financial services once they are 18.

[8] Measure for "repay loan" will be determined jointly with programme implementers.

[9] Boys are not considered direct beneficiaries because the primary target of the TEAM Girl Malawi programme is girls.

designed on. Results for the sub-evaluation questions will be aggregated across the sample to answer the primary evaluation question.

Table 3: Evaluation questions and summary of quantitative and qualitative data or analysis

Evaluation Question	Relevant DAC Criteria[10]	Relevant Intermediate Outcomes
1. What impact did the GEC funding have on marginalised girls' learning and their transition into primary school, vocational training, safe and fairly paid employment or other pathway of their choice? a. What is the impact of the TEAM Girl Malawi intervention on girls' learning outcomes? b. What is the impact of the TEAM Girl Malawi intervention on girls' reported transition into primary school, vocational training, safe and fairly paid employment or another pathway?	Impact Effectiveness Relevance	IO 2. Improvement in quality of education at CBE, Primary Schools and Girls' Clubs
2. What are the factors that contribute to or detract from marginalised girls' transition into education, training or employment? a. How does the quality of education influence girls' transition? b. How do gender perceptions and norms influence girls' transition? c. How does community support for girls' education influence girls' transition?	Coherence Impact	IO 1. Attendance
3. How sustainable were the activities funded by the GEC? a. To what extent are TEAM Girl Malawi activities embedded in CBE and MoEST and MoGCDSW processes, structure and staff capacities? b. To what extent do communities demonstrate ownership over improving education for girls in TEAM Girl Malawi target areas?	Sustainability Effectiveness Efficiency	IO 4. Strengthened district and national leadership and engagement in marginalised adolescent girls' education
4. How successfully did LNGB projects reduce barriers to participation in education (e.g., traditional, vocational), employment or other pathway of choice for marginalised girls? a. How have TEAM Girl Malawi interventions affected girls' attendance? b. How have TEAM Girl Malawi interventions affected the quality of education at the institutions where they take place (if located in an institution)? c. How have TEAM Girl Malawi interventions	Impact Effectiveness Relevance	IO 3. Improvement in community members' understanding and use of support mechanisms for marginalised girls

[10] DAC Criteria is taken from OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee). For more information, please visit https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm

Evaluation Question	Relevant DAC Criteria[10]	Relevant Intermediate Outcomes
affected community support and attitudes?		

2.2 Overall evaluation design

The evaluation of TEAM Girl Malawi project employs a mixed-methods, longitudinal, quasi-experimental design. The evaluation utilises data from learning assessments and a package of quantitative and qualitative instruments used with different respondents to inform findings. The variety of tools, respondents and data collection methods allow data to be triangulated and linked across evaluation questions and indicators.

TEAM Girl Malawi rolled out activities in a cohort design.[11] Given this implementation structure, the evaluation capitalises upon the cohort structures to measure and compare findings against the results of Cohorts 1 and 3.[12] The cohort design also helps avoid and any potential ethical and logistical concerns in identifying a separate control group of girls for the evaluation. Evaluation data is collected from both cohorts at 3 separate time points:

- Year 1 (July 2019): Cohort 1 baseline
- Year 3 (November 2021): Cohort 1 endline, Cohort 3 baseline
- Year 5 (July 2023): Cohort 1 follow-up, Cohort 3 endline

A joint sampling approach is used for the TEAM Girl Malawi evaluation using two cohorts of programme participants. Specifically, STS and the project collected learning and transition data for girls randomly sampled from Cohorts 1 and 3. The team also collected IO data from respondents—parents, caregivers, CBE facilitators, teachers, headteachers and community leaders—in the CBEs and communities where sampled girls live.

The midline evaluation design adheres to the current logframe and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework. To examine the ToC's assumptions between IOs and outcomes, STS linked all data to girls' unique identifiers, analysing the relationships between scores on IO indicators and outcomes. Additionally, the evaluation design is 'gender equality and social inclusion transformative', which means that the evaluation design considers gender, disability, other social differences and inequalities. These characteristics are explicitly accommodated in the selection of project beneficiaries, design of evaluation tools and protocols for administration, sampling of respondents, selection and training of enumerators and reporting of evaluation results. Although the project is inclusive of adolescent marginalised boys as indirect beneficiaries, quantitative midline data was only collected from girls per the TEAM Girl Malawi MEL framework and STS' midline research design report.

[11] In this cohort structure, TEAM Girl Malawi first provided services to one cohort of girls in the first year of the programme; then expanded to a second cohort of girls in the second year; a third cohort in the third year; and others. This structure allows for iterative adaptation and improvement in programme implementation.

[12] As detailed in the MEL framework, TEAM Girl Malawi has determined that a comparison group is not appropriate in the project's context. No services would be offered to comparison group girls, which raises ethical concerns given levels of marginalisation. This could cause high levels of resistance from the community, MoEST and MOGCDSW. Further, these girls would be prohibitively difficult to track across evaluation points.

2.3 Evaluation ethics

STS adhered to TEAM Girl Malawi ethics, child protection (CP) and safeguarding policies throughout the midline process. This included providing all CERT staff and enumerators with relevant policies and engaging TEAM Girl Malawi to present on the policies during enumerator training. Enumerators were provided with TEAM Girl Malawi persons of contact for each district to ensure that any ethical issues could be mitigated or reported. A summary of the ethical protocols and the midline approaches to adhering to protocols is presented in Annex 12, Table 1, Page 143.

One safeguarding issue arose during the in-field practice during the quantitative enumerator training—enumerators discovered 18 records of marriages involving girls under the age of 18. The issues were reported to the TEAM Girl Malawi staff on-site, including the programme officer, MEL officer and CBE facilitators.

2.4 Quantitative evaluation methodology

Quantitative evaluation tools

Three midline evaluation surveys and two learning assessments were developed and used for the evaluation's quantitative component, which are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Quantitative midline evaluation tools

Tool name	Measuring relevant indicator(s)	Developed by?
Girls' survey	O 1.3 IO 2.1 IO 2.2 IO 3.1 IO 4.1 IO 4.2 IO 4.3	STS, Link, TfaC
Household survey	IO 4.2 IO 4.3	STS, Link, TfaC
CBE facilitator and AoC survey	IO 2.1 IO 2.2 IO 3.1	STS, Link, TfaC
EGRA	IO 1.1	STS (adapted from existing tools)[13, 14]
EGMA	IO 1.2	STS (adapted from existing tools)[15]

Before pretesting and data collection, STS and TEAM Girl Malawi collaboratively adapted existing girls' survey and household survey tools. The two surveys remain relatively stable

[13] Creative Associates International, RTI International and Seward Inc. *Malawi National Early Grade Reading Assessment Survey: Final Assessment – November 2012*. Washington, DC: USAID, 2012.

[14] USAID/Malawi and MoEST. *USAID Funded Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) Activity 2010 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGMA): National Midline Report 2010.* Washington, DC: USAID, 2010.

[15] USAID/Malawi and MoEST. *USAID Funded Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) Activity 2010 Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA): National Midline Report 2010.* Washington, DC: USAID, 2010.

across evaluation points, with minor revisions or additions.[16] STS also developed a new project-specific CBE facilitator survey at midline to measure indicators that did not require baseline values. STS also adapted the EGRA and EGMA learning assessments from previously existing tools, which is discussed in more detail in the section titled 'Learning Assessments' (below). STS shared drafts of all tools with Link and relevant consortium members, who commented and provided revised or new items based on the project's indicators and specific implementation priorities.

Learning assessments

STS adapted learning assessments from existing EGRAs and EGMAs that had been previously administered in Malawi under the United States for International Development (USAID) Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support Programme, in collaboration with the MoEST.[17] Both the EGRA and EGMA were administered in Chichewa, with the EGRA testing reading skills in Chichewa. Chichewa was selected as the assessment language because it is the national language of Malawi and the primary language of instruction through standard 4.

Details of EGRA and EGMA subtasks are included in Table 5. Most subtasks included autostops — or early stop rules. This allowed enumerators to automatically stop one subtask and move on to the next if learners did not correctly answer a predetermined set of items. Autostops were established to allow respondents to move efficiently through the assessment and not spend a lengthy period trying to demonstrate skills they do not have. Autostops also allow for respondents with low learning levels to be exempt from attempting all items on each subtask. The length of time allocated for each timed subtask and a breakdown of subtasks are noted in Table 5.

Table 5: Learning assessments

Tool name	Subtask	Purpose	Administration	Scoring
EGRA – local language	Initial sound identification	Phonemic awareness	Untimed; autostop after first 5 items	Correct initial sounds out of 10
	Letter name identification	Alphabet knowledge	Timed – 2 minutes; autostop after first 10 items	Correct letter names per minute; 100 items total
	Syllable identification	Alphabet knowledge and decoding	Timed – 2 minutes; autostop after first 10 items	Correct syllable sounds per minute; 100 items total
	Familiar word reading	Sight-word recognition and decoding	Timed – 2 minutes; autostop after first 5 items	Correct familiar words per minute; 50 items total
	Oral reading fluency	Decoding and reading fluency	Timed – 2 minutes; autostop after first 6 items	Correct words per minute; 54 items total
	Reading comprehension	Reading comprehension	Untimed; number of questions asked corresponds to how many words	Correct out of 5

[16] This assumes that the project's ToC also remains stable across evaluation points. Revisions or additions will be based on learnings from the midline and implementation.

[17] The Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support activity was implemented by Creative Associates International, RTI International and Seward Inc. from 2010 to 2013.

Tool name	Subtask	Purpose	Administration	Scoring
			read in oral reading fluency passage	
	Listening comprehension	Oral language comprehension and vocabulary	Untimed; all questions asked of all respondents	Correct out of 5
EGMA	Number recognition	Numerals and numericities identification	Timed – 2 minutes; no autostop	Correct per minute; 20 items total
	Quantity discrimination	Numerical magnitudes comparisons	Untimed; autostop after 4 consecutive incorrect items	Correct out of 10
	Missing numbers	Number patterns identification	Untimed; autostop after 4 consecutive incorrect items	Correct out of 10
	Addition (level 1)	Arithmetic skills	Timed – 2 minutes; no autostop[18]	Correct per minute; 20 items total
	Addition (level 2)	Arithmetic skills	Untimed; no autostop; only administered if respondent correctly answered at least one item correct on addition level 1 subtask	Correct out of 5
	Subtraction (level 1)	Arithmetic skills	Timed – 2 minutes; no autostop	Correct per minute; 20 items total
	Subtraction (level 2)	Arithmetic skills	Untimed; no autostop; only administered if respondent correctly answered at least one item correct on subtraction level 1 subtask	Correct out of 5
	Word problems	Conceptual and real-word mathematics understanding	Untimed; autostop after 4 consecutive incorrect items	Correct out of 6

Enumerators

STS and CERT worked collaboratively to recruit, hire and train enumerators for the pre-test and operational midline data collection activities. STS provided CERT with key qualifications and job descriptions to support its recruitment and selection process. CERT then recruited local female enumerators who met the required qualifications. Following an initial screening, oral interviews and reference checks, 12 enumerators were selected for quantitative data collection. All selected enumerators had prior experience conducting surveys on paper or

[18] Learners who did not correctly answer any items on the addition level 1 or subtraction level 1 subtasks were not asked items from the corresponding level 2 subtask.

electronically; more than half had experience conducting EGRAs using Tangerine®, an open-source software developed by RTI International. All were fluent in Chichewa.

Before training commenced, all selected enumerators signed contracts with CERT that stipulated their expected roles, including their expected ethical and professional conduct during training and data collection. Additionally, all enumerators underwent police security clearance checks as required by Link as part of its child safety and protection procedures for all persons working under their projects.

The midline quantitative enumerator training, co-facilitated by STS and CERT, and with support from Link, took place from 25–29 October 2021 face-to-face in Lilongwe: STS participated remotely. During the training, enumerators were split into two groups— those responsible for administering surveys and those responsible for administering the learning assessments. STS based group assignments on the enumerators' previous experience and expertise. Sessions were delivered in plenary and group formats and included the following topics:

- Midline study purpose and research ethics
- Introduction to TEAM Girl Malawi project
- Safeguarding and CP
- EGRA/EGMA and equating tests
- Surveys
- Using tablets for data collection
- CBE mobilisation and team roles and responsibilities
- Accommodations for girls with disabilities
- Data collection logistics
- Supervisor roles and responsibilities

Learning assessment enumerators took part in two assessor accuracy quizzes during the training. The quizzes measured enumerators' ability to score consistently and accurately with a 'gold standard' script of responses. All enumerators scored over 90% on both quizzes, indicating high assessor accuracy. The training schedule also included one day of in-field practice, during which enumerators visited a TEAM Girl Malawi CBE community that was not part of the midline sample.

Quantitative data collection

To manage and track data collection issues and progress during operational data collection, the enumerator teams in the field completed Quality Assurance Daily Reports and compiled them into a single Data Quality Assurance Master Tracker. The tracker enabled easier reference and summary counts to be calculated regarding the number and type of data collected. The tracker was then cross-referenced against the number and type of cases present in the uploaded data. CERT enumerators conducted daily interrater-reliability assessments, which were then scored by STS to evaluate assessor drift during operational data collection.

Using the Quality Assurance Daily Reports, STS maintained detailed documentation of all issues encountered in issue trackers which were used as part of the data cleaning process. STS implemented three main criteria to guide data quality assessment—data needs to be complete, accurate and internally consistent. Disposition codes were applied to categorise the various issues or problems that emerged in the data collection process as well as in the datasets. These disposition codes were used to determine cleaning rules, which were incorporated into the database using the syntax to clean the data accordingly. Disposition codes were also used to flag any learning centre-level issues, such as sampling issues, noting when paper tools were used or if security issues were encountered. These coding and flagging procedures helped ensure the various and nuanced context of data collection at the learning centre-level are sufficiently catalogued and considered during the data cleaning, analysis and reporting process.

Quantitative data analysis

FCDO reporting templates guided STS's data analysis plan. Quantitative data was coded and analysed in Stata. STS used multi-stage data cleaning plans ensuring all data values were within the allowable range. Reserve codes were used appropriately and developed metadata and sample documentation, and codebook for final data delivery. STS also followed the standard best practices for cleaning and finalising data as outlined in EGRA and EGMA Toolkit guidance and LNGB guidance. This also included developing and providing a master codebook and merging or appending data files where possible for easier use and manipulation.

Data from different surveys were linked using unique learner IDs or a learning-centre ID assigned by TEAM Girl Malawi, depending on the survey. STS produced a cleaned and merged data set to analyse the different responses. All items or questions were analysed individually; means, standard deviations and frequencies were produced for each variable. In the case of the EGMA and EGRA, data was synthesised at the subtask level and a test level. In addition, a series of composites was created using variables in the household surveys to synthesise the data and increase the power of the analysis.

Quantitative sample selection

Midline tools were administered to respondents across the sampled CBE communities in Dedza, Lilongwe and Mchinji. STS administered three quantitative surveys:

1. A girls' survey was administered to adolescent girls in the TEAM Girl Malawi project Cohorts 1 and 3. The surveys were slightly different for each cohort.

2. A household survey was administered to one parent or caregiver of each of the girls who participated in the assessment. The household survey was also administered to a sample of community members who participated in TfaC-led activities. The surveys were slightly different for respondents related to girls in Cohort 1 and respondents related to girls in Cohort 3.

3. A CBE facilitator survey was administered to the facilitator of each Cohort 1 CBE in the sample.[19]

TEAM Girl Malawi uses a two-stage stratified random sampling procedure to sample CBEs and then girls within CBEs. The project randomly selected 14 CBEs from Cohort 1 at baseline and 11 CBEs from Cohort 3, 25 in total from across the three districts where the

[19] CBE facilitators were those working in CBEs on informal primary education curriculum. This did not include Agents of Change, facilitators working separately with Girls' Clubs through TfaC.

project operates. The project also selected two replacement CBEs per cohort in case a CBE was hard to reach. Then, the enumerators randomly selected 27 girls per CBE.

At midline, the total population of Cohort 3 CBEs had decreased, so the same sample size declined accordingly. 11 CBEs were included, which retained the original sampling parameters described above. Considering this decrease, STS followed the same protocols used at baseline to select Cohort 3 girls to sample. The study also followed up with the girls who were randomly selected at the baseline period (Cohort 1). In keeping with the attrition assumptions described in this evaluation's pre-baseline inception report, any girls who were no longer enrolled in the CBE or not located at midline were not replaced.

Furthermore, the evaluation design also necessitates conducting girls' surveys and household surveys. The same girls selected to comprise the EGRA and EGMA sample comprised the girls' survey sample, and one parent or caregiver per sampled girl was interviewed using the household survey.

Quantitative sample sizes

The sample size was chosen to generalise the results at project level. Demographics of the baseline sample are presented in Tables 2 through 5 located on pages 144-145 in Annex 12. The representativeness of the midline sample has been assessed by comparing Tables 2 through 5 with data provided by the Team Girl project for each cohort.

Annex 12 provides details on the midline sample and population breakdown by district. The midline sample of cohorts 1 and 3 represents the TEAM Girl Malawi beneficiary population by district and age group, with results generalisable to the project level.

In cohort 1, Dedza represents over one-half of the midline cohort 1 sample and the just under half the population of TEAM Girl Malawi beneficiaries (sample: 55.1%, population: 47.1%). Mchinji represents just over one-third (sample: 35.5%, population: 34.7%). Lilongwe represents a much lower proportion of the sample compared to the population (sample: 9.4%, population: 18.2%). This is due to the fact that a large proportion of the baseline sample from Lilongwe had dropped out and were no longer participating in the programme. As evaluations follow individual girls through each data collection point, the sample was not supplemented to ensure representation of Lilongwe.

In cohort 3, Dedza represents two-fifths of the TEAM Girl Malawi beneficiaries and just over one-third of sampled beneficiaries (sample: 34.0%, population: 39.9%). Mchinji similarly represents two-fifths of the programme beneficiaries and one-third of the sample (sample: 34.0%, population: 40.1%). Finally, Lilongwe make up one-fifth of all programme beneficiaries and just over one quarter of the sample (sample: 27.3%, population:19.9%). Lilongwe is slightly oversampled in cohort 3 as a function of first selecting sufficient CBEs in the first stage of sampling stratification. Given the drop in the proportion of girls enrolled in the programme between baseline and midline for cohort 1 this oversampling will hopefully reduce effects of attrition between midline and endline for cohort 3 on the representativeness of girls in Lilongwe.

Table 4 on page 145 of Annex 12 provides breakdowns of the baseline sample and beneficiary population by age, respectively. Girls in group 1 (aged 10-11 years) were intentionally oversampled at baseline in cohort 1, making up 15.9% of the sample but 10.8% of the population. By midline, the proportion of girls in this group (now aged 12-13 years) had dropped to 6.2% of the sample and 8.8% of the population – more closely reflecting the true proportion of girls in this age group at midline. Representation of girls in groups 2 and 3 also fluctuated between baseline and midline for cohort 1, with girls in group 2 slightly

underrepresented and girls in group 3 slightly overrepresented. In cohort 3, the sample closely mirrors the population proportions by age group.

It is not possible to fully assess the representativeness of the sample on disability prevalence. Two sources were used to collect disability data. Source 1 beneficiary enrolment disability information was internally collected using the Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions. At baseline and midline, Source 2 was collected using the Washington Group/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning. Table 5, referring to Source 2, in Annex 12, indicates that the proportion of cohort 1 girls from the baseline with at least one domain of functional difficulty was 34.4% and 37.1% at midline, while Source 2, measuring the proportion of enrolled girls with at least one domain of functional difficulty was 8.5% at baseline. The proportion of cohort 3 girls at midline (baseline for this cohort) with at least one difficulty was 40.3% (Source 1), and enrolment data (Source 2) also indicates that 40.3% of cohort 3 girls had at least one functional difficulty. Given that the question sets and methodologies differ between the two sources, analysts cannot compare the sample proportions to the midline populations. Results on the Child Functioning questions are used for all midline reporting.

Difference in the anticipated and actual sample sizes, as well as remarks on differences, are detailed in Table 6. An additional breakdown of the sample, including by evaluation, by cohort and district, by age, and by disability is available in Annex 12 Tables 2 through 5.

Table 6: Quantitative sample sizes

Tool name	Anticipated sample size	Actual sample size	Remarks on why anticipated and actual sample sizes are different
EGRA/EGMA learning assessments	675	501[20]	Attrition among Cohort 1 girls was much higher than expected. Any girls who were no longer enrolled in the CBE or not located at midline were not replaced, in keeping with the attrition assumptions described in this evaluation's pre-baseline inception report.
Girls survey	675	501	As above, attrition among Cohort 1 girls was much higher than expected and girls could not be replaced due to the study's longitudinal design.
Household survey	675	482	As above, attrition among Cohort 1 girls was much higher than expected and households of such girls could not be replaced. In addition, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic dissuaded household members from meeting with data collectors.
CBE facilitator survey	14	12	CBE facilitators were not available at the time of data collection in two of the sampled CBEs
Community member surveys	N/A	15	Additional community members were surveyed during data collection to learn more about their experiences

Note: Actual sample size is representative of the number of records after data cleaning.

[20] Of the 378 Cohort 1 girls sampled at baseline, 266 were still enrolled and attending at midline. The midline sample attempted to reach all 266 of these girls, but only 210 were found.

Challenges in midline data collection and limitations of the evaluation design

STS and TEAM Girl Malawi faced some challenges during the quantitative data collection and analysis. In Quarter 3 of 2021, the ToC and logic model were revised simultaneously as STS designed the midline evaluation tools for data collection. Second, qualitative data collection was delayed by a natural disaster, Cyclone Ana, in late January 2022.

2.5 Qualitative evaluation methodology

Qualitative data collection tools

Five qualitative data collection tools were administered at the midline (see Table 7).

Table 7: Qualitative tools and revisions

Tool name	Purpose	Related outcomes	Tool developed by	Tool revised from baseline? If so, how?
FGD with adolescent girls	Capture the perspectives experiences and aspirations of the project's main beneficiaries – marginalised adolescent girls	O 2 IO 3 IO 4	STS, Link, TfaC	Yes - Tools were streamlined and questions cut to reduce length. Select questions were made optional due to sensitivity for younger respondents. Enumerators were given the option to reverse order to administer a participatory learning activity first, in case younger respondents needed more 'warm up' to feel comfortable sharing in a group setting.
KII with community leaders	Capture the perspectives and attitudes of key stakeholders at the community level – especially those who may serve as gatekeepers or agents of change within communities. Also enables a monitoring of potential backlash, issues or concerns within communities.	O 2 O 3 IO 4	STS, Link, TfaC	Yes
KII with government officials (both district and national)	Draw on the knowledge and experience of the most relevant government officials at the district-level. Examine the degree of project's alignment with government policies and district-level buy-	O 3 IO 4 IO 5	STS, Link, TfaC	Yes

Tool name	Purpose	Related outcomes	Tool developed by	Tool revised from baseline? If so, how?
	in to TEAM Girl approach to better understand barriers and opportunities to sustainability			
KII with Agents of Change	Draw on the knowledge and experience of the most relevant project implementers and those with immediate experience working with beneficiaries	O 2 IO 3 IO 4	STS, Link, TfaC	New tool at midline
KII with CBE facilitators	Draw on the knowledge and experience of the most relevant project implementers and those with immediate experience working with beneficiaries	O 2 IO 3 IO 4	STS, Link, TfaC	New tool at midline

A major focus throughout focus group discussion (FGDs) and key informant interview (KIIs) was on barriers to girls' education, both in terms of access to school or CBE, attendance at school or CBE and transition. To further understand these barriers, adolescent girls participated in a participatory learning activity called 'The Path', which highlighted different impediments at home, on the way to the learning centre and at the learning centre.

Qualitative sample selection and sample sizes

The study used the preliminary results of the quantitative analysis to indicate target groups and topics of interest for the qualitative study. The exact qualitative sample was determined after this preliminary quantitative data analysis.

One qualitative data collection site was identified; one FGD with adolescent girls and several KIIs were conducted at that site. In addition, KIIs were completed at the district and national levels. The qualitative sample breakdown by tool and district is detailed in Table 8.

Table 8: Qualitative sample size by tool

Tool	Lilongwe	Dedza	Mchinji	Total
Adolescent Girls FGD[21]	1	1	1	3
Community Leader KIIs[22]	2	3	1	6
District-level government representatives KIIs	1		1	2
National-level government representatives KIIs	2			2
Agents of Change KIIs	1	1	1	3
CBE facilitators KIIs	1	1	1	3
Total	19			

[21] Each adolescent girl FGD focused on one of three different groups of girls: girls who had dropped out of TEAM Girl Malawi, girls who had scored zero words correct on the ORF subtask, and typical learners at the CBE.

[22] Community leaders included traditional authorities, chiefs and members of mothers groups.

Qualitative data collection

Experienced qualitative researchers from CERT conducted all qualitative field research. STS led remote training with four data collectors over four days, January 10-14, 2022.

Qualitative data collection took place from January 17 through February 11, 2022. Each interview or focus group included a facilitator and a note-taker to take written notes during the FGDs or KIIs. Where respondents provided permission, data collection was audio recorded. Every evening, the data collection teams met for debriefing and submitted summary field notes from the day's interviews and focus groups for checking and review. Within one week of data collection, note-takers produced expanded field notes in English using audio recordings. Expanded field notes captured quotes, key points and themes that emerged for each question, factors that aided analysis such as non-verbal activity or body language, and any big ideas, thoughts or take-aways from the note-taker. Field notes were entered into Word documents and imported into NVivo for analysis.

Qualitative data handling and analysis

Qualitative data were transcribed, translated and reviewed for accuracy and quality as fully as possible upon the completion of data collection.[23] All FGD and KII audio recordings, field notes, transcriptions and translations were shared and stored on STS's secured, password-protected server. Data were cleaned and anonymised, with participant information remaining confidential. Finalised field notes and translated transcriptions were imported into NVivo 12, a data analysis software package, to systematically code and analyse the data. The qualitative data analysis methodology incorporated an iterative approach and included content analysis and constant comparison of narrative data to identify and validate emerging themes. A preliminary codebook was developed based on the TEAM Girl Malawi midline study core research themes and key concepts, and additional codes that emerged during the data analysis were incorporated and added to the codebook. The qualitative data and emergent themes were examined within the broader context of the quantitative results and indicators, with relevant findings woven into the report as appropriate to help provide additional insights and understanding into the TEAM Girl Malawi baseline evaluation results, analyses and external evaluator recommendations.

3. Outcome findings

Midline results for the following TEAM Girl Malawi outcomes are presented in this section:

- O 1: Number of highly marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved learning outcomes[24]
- O 2: Number of marginalised girls who have transitioned through key stages of education, training or employment
- O 3: Project can demonstrate that the changes it has brought about which increase learning and transition through education cycles are sustainable

3.1 Learning outcomes

TEAM Girl Malawi's first outcome is improved learning outcomes. This section will present findings on the following indicators:

[23] FGDs and KIIs were audio-recorded to enable thorough transcriptions, translations and quality checks.

[24] Baseline results for O 1.3 Number of highly marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved life skills outcomes are presented in section 4.2.

- 1.1 Number of highly marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved literacy outcomes
- 1.2 Number of highly marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved numeracy outcomes

"Improved literacy outcomes" were measured by matching aggregate EGRA and EGMA scores at baseline (2019) and midline (2021) for girls in cohort 1 who participated in both data collections. If there was any increase in the aggregate EGRA or EGMA score, the girl was counted as showing improvement. Midline findings for the third learning outcome—O 1.3 Number of highly marginalised girls/ supported by GEC with improved life skills outcomes—are detailed in Section 4.2: Life skills.

Background Context on Literacy Outcomes in Malawi

National early grade reading performance in Chichewa has been assessed annually in Malawi since 2010.[25] For literacy, understanding girls' outcomes on oral reading fluency (ORF) and reading comprehension is particularly useful for understanding the construct of literacy overall because there is a relationship between oral reading fluency and comprehension and because these two skills together represent what is intuitively understood to mean that a child is able to read.[26]

Recommendations for national benchmarks for ORF and reading comprehension were proposed in Malawi by a group of 24 national and international experts.[27] In November 2014, the Malawi MoEST, with technical assistance from USAID, created benchmarks for Standards 1–3 in syllable reading, familiar word reading, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension.[28] The benchmarks were set for children enrolled in formal basic education at Standard 3, a different population than is targeted by TEAM Girl Malawi. The expectations of those benchmarks are that a child, by the time they are in Standard 3, should have reached 50 correct words per minute (CWPM) in reading fluency and 80% (4 out of 5 questions) in reading comprehension. When those benchmarks were set, the expectation was that within 5 years, 50% of all Standard 3 students would have achieved those benchmarks. Results from other reading programs have found that while interventions do improve indicators of reading such as correct words per minute, on average, primary school children still do not reach the established national benchmarks. For example, the results of the USAID Malawi MERIT intervention showed that at endline, 81 percent of learners were still unable to read a single word correct per minute in Chichewa.[29] As the results demonstrate, nearly 5 years later in 2021 and after 2 years experiencing a global health pandemic, these adolescent girls continue to fall short of these benchmarks but also demonstrate improvement between baseline and midline.

[25] USAID. (2014). Proposing Benchmarks for Early Grade Reading in Malawi, https://shared.rti.org/content/proposing-benchmarks-early-grade-reading-malawi#

[26] The Simple View of Reading is a theory that attempts to define the skills that contribute to early reading comprehension. According to the original theory, an individual's reading comprehension is the product of her decoding skill and language comprehension. Source: Gough, P.B. & Tunmer, W.E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. Remedial and Special Education, 7, 6–10.

[27] USAID. (2014).

[28] USAID. (2016). Assistance to Basic Education. All Children Reading. ERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity Early Grade Reading Assessment, Chichewa National Baseline for Standards 1 and 2, June 2016. MERIT - Quarterly Progress Report, Oct - Dec 2020 (usaid.gov)

[29] USAID. (2021). Assistance to Basic Education: All Children Reading (ABE ACR) MERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity. Final Project Report, September 29, 2015–March 15, 2021 Source: PA00XKFT.pdf (usaid.gov)

Literacy Cohort 1

Midline data analyses shows that Cohort 1 girls demonstrated an overall improvement in literacy, as measured by the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). The proportion of girls who improved their aggregated EGRA score between baseline and midline (Indicator 1.1) is 88% (See Table 9).[30]

Table 9: Aggregated Early Grade Reading Assessment scores, Cohort 1

Population	N	O 1.1 Percentage of improved literacy	Mean Aggregated EGRA score	
			Midline	Baseline
All girls (Cohort 1)	169	88.0%	38.2	17.9

The mean aggregate EGRA scores improved as well. At baseline, the mean score was 17.9 (out of 100), while at midline, the mean score was 38.2. These positive trends are notable, particularly considering the additional challenges participating girls might have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The trend toward improved reading outcomes is further supported by examining the percentage of girls who were classified as 'non-learner' on the seven subtasks in the EGRA (See Table 10). The percentage of girls classified as 'non-learner'—those who earned zero scores, a measure of respondents who did not answer any items on a subtask correctly—decreased on every subtask.

Given the importance of two subskills, oral reading fluency (ORF) and reading comprehension, to the acquisition and development of reading, it is useful to examine changes more closely in those zero scores from baseline to the midline. The proportion of girls who received a zero score on the ORF subtask—those who did not read a single word correctly in the time allotted — dropped between baseline and midline from 80.0% to 49.0% overall. Likewise, the proportion of girls who received a zero score on reading comprehension, indicating they could not respond correctly to even one comprehension question, dropped between baseline and midline from 81.3% to 57.5%.

Girls improved their learning both in terms of proficiency and growth. The distribution of girls across the four learning bands—non-learners to proficient learners—improved from baseline to midline. For example, 78.0% of girls were designated as non-learners at baseline, and 0.0% were designated as proficient learners. At midline, the proportion of girls designated as non-learners decreased to 54.2%, and the proportion of proficient learners increased to 1.9%. Changes in learning bands are shown in Table 6 on page 145 in Annex 12.

Literacy Cohort 3

In general, the literacy performance of girls in Cohort 3 is low. The average aggregated EGRA score for girls in Cohort 3 is 31.6 (out of 100). However, it is important to note that the average aggregate EGRA score for girls in Cohort 3 is higher at their baseline than the average aggregate EGRA score was for Cohort 1 at their baseline (20.0 out of 100).[31] A possible explanation for this is that TEAM Girl Malawi was successful in targeting the most marginalised girls when selecting girls for Cohort 1 and this was represented in lower

[30] The aggregated EGRA score is composed of the scores on the seven EGRA subtasks. Each subtask is equally weighted. The possible range of scores on the aggregated EGRA is 0 to 100.

[31] Because the average EGRA score for girls in Cohort 3 is starting at a higher level than the average EGRA score for girls in Cohort 1 did at its baseline, we predict that the growth from baseline to midline for girls in Cohort 3 might be lower than that found for girls in Cohort 1.

average aggregate EGRA scores. Both cohorts demonstrate low average aggregate EGRA scores in comparison to the national benchmarks mentioned previously.

Despite a comparatively higher aggregate EGRA score, Cohort 3 girls have low skill levels in all reading subtasks. The majority of Cohort 3 girls fell into the non-learner learning band[32] in all subtasks, except for listening comprehension (see Table 10). Only 1.0% of girls were categorised as proficient learners in initial sound identification, 16.0% in letter name identification, 16.0% in syllable identification, 22.0% in familiar word reading, 2.1% in ORF, and 13.1% in reading comprehension. This indicates considerable room for growth in literacy skills for girls in Cohort 3.

Table 10: Literacy proficiency bands, Cohort 3

Categories (% of items correct)	Subtask 1	Subtask 2	Subtask 3	Subtask 4	Subtask 5	Subtask 6	Subtask 7
	Initial sound identification	Letter name identification	Syllable identification	Familiar word reading	Oral reading fluency	Reading comprehension	Listening comprehension
Non-learner 0%	57.8%	32.1%	50.9%	54.0%	61.3%	65.2%	3.5%
Emergent learner 1–40%	31.0%	32.8%	19.9%	13.6%	27.5%	9.1%	26.1%
Established learner 41–80%	10.1%	19.2%	13.2%	10.5%	9.1%	12.5%	44.6%
Proficient learner 81–100%	1.0%	16.0%	16.0%	22.0%	2.1%	13.2%	25.8%

Numeracy Cohort 1

Midline data analyses showed that Cohort 1 girls demonstrated an overall improvement in numeracy, as measured by the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA). From baseline to midline, 85.9% of girls improved their aggregate numeracy score. (Indicator 1.2). Also, the average aggregate EGMA scores improved. At baseline, the mean aggregate score was 33.5 (out of 100). This improved to 56.6 at the midline.

The trend toward improved numeracy outcomes is further supported by an examination of non-learners, or girls who received zero scores, on each EGMA subtask. The proportion of girls who earned a zero score on the word problem subtask dropped between baseline and midline from 21.5% to 8.4%. Reduction in zero scores were seen in every single mathematics subtask at midline for Cohort 1 (see Table 11).

Similarly, the distribution of girls in learning bands improved from baseline to midline. For example, 26.2% of girls were designated as non-learners at baseline on the quantity discrimination subtask, and 8.4% were designated as proficient learners. At midline, the proportion of girls designated as non-learners decreased to 6.1%, and the proportion of proficient learners increased to 36.9%. Changes in proficiency bands are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Foundational numeracy gaps, Cohort 1

Categories	Subtask 1	Subtask 2	Subtask 3	Subtask 4a	Subtask 4b	Subtask 5a	Subtask 5b	Subtask 6

[32] Learner categories for both learning assessments are defined as non-learners who answered 0% of questions correctly, emergent learners who answered 1-40% of questions correctly, established learners who answered 41–80% of questions correctly and proficient learners who answered 81–100% of questions correctly.

(% of items correct)	Number recognition*		Quantity discrimination*		Missing numbers*		Addition (1)*		Addition (2)*		Subtraction (1)*		Subtraction (2)*		Word problems*	
	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
Non-learner 0%	10.3%	4.2%	26.2%	6.1%	34.6%	15.0%	28.0%	7.9%	50.9%	22.0%	35.0%	12.1%	53.3%	23.8%	21.5%	8.4%
Emergent learner 1–40%	29.0%	15.9%	27.1%	15.9%	52.3%	48.1%	22.0%	18.7%	31.8%	28.5%	23.8%	17.8%	32.2%	33.2%	29.4%	19.2%
Established learner 41–80%	33.6%	24.8%	38.3%	41.1%	12.6%	34.6%	34.6%	33.2%	13.6%	32.2%	29.0%	42.5%	11.2%	26.2%	36.4%	32.2%
Proficient learner 81–100%	27.1%	55.1%	8.4%	36.9%	0.5%	2.3%	15.4%	40.2%	3.7%	17.3%	12.1%	27.6%	3.3%	16.8%	12.6%	40.2%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates that differences in the distribution of learners by categories between baseline and midline was significantly different at $p<0.05$.

Numeracy Cohort 3

In general, the numeracy performance of girls in Cohort 3 is low. The average aggregated EGMA score for girls in Cohort 3 is 44.7 (of 100). Just as in literacy, it is important to note that the average aggregate EGMA score for girls in Cohort 3 is higher at their baseline than the average aggregate EGMA score was for Cohort 1 at their baseline (32.3 out of 100).

Despite starting with a comparatively higher aggregate EGMA score, Cohort 3 girls have low skill levels in all mathematics subtasks (see Table 12). The majority of Cohort 3 girls did not fall into the proficient learner category in any subtasks. The subtasks with the highest proportion of non-learners were addition 2 (34.5%), subtraction 2 (35.5%) and missing numbers (27.9%). The subtasks with the highest proportion of proficient learners were number discrimination (41.5%), addition 1 (23.7%) and word problems (22.3%). This indicates substantial room for growth in numeracy skills for girls in Cohort 3.

Table 12: Numeracy proficiency bands, Cohort 3

Categories (% of items correct)	Subtask 1 Number recognition	Subtask 2 Quantity discrimination	Subtask 3 Missing numbers	Subtask 4a Addition (1)	Subtask 4b Addition (2)	Subtask 5a Subtraction (1)	Subtask 5b Subtraction (2)	Subtask 6 Word problems
Non-learner 0%	5.9%	13.2%	27.9%	13.6%	34.5%	16.7%	35.5%	14.6%
Emergent learner 1–40%	25.4%	23.3%	46.7%	26.8%	32.1%	29.6%	36.2%	26.8%
Established learner 41–80%	27.2%	33.1%	22.3%	35.9%	23.0%	35.9%	20.6%	36.2%
Proficient learner	41.5%	30.3%	3.1%	23.7%	10.5%	17.8%	7.7%	22.3%

Categories (% of items correct)	Subtask 1 Number recognition	Subtask 2 Quantity discrimination	Subtask 3 Missing numbers	Subtask 4a Addition (1)	Subtask 4b Addition (2)	Subtask 5a Subtraction (1)	Subtask 5b Subtraction (2)	Subtask 6 Word problems
81–100%								

Learning Outcomes by Subgroups

An analysis of learning outcomes by subgroups in cohort 1 suggests that inequality persisted between baseline and midline, when considering characteristics such as age, disability, and marriage status, among others. See Annex 12's Table 17 on page 157 for full details on learning outcomes by subgroup. For example, older Cohort 1 girls at midline post higher learning outcomes in both literacy and numeracy than younger girls at midline, which was also found at baseline. Girls in Cohort 1 who had at least one functional disability (n=78) had lower literacy and numeracy aggregate scores than other girls. Girls in the married and caregiver, orphaned and high chore burden subgroups had higher literacy and numeracy scores than other girls. When interpreting these results, it is important to keep in mind that girls who are married and caregivers, who are orphans or who have a high chore burden were also more likely to be in the older age groups. In other words, these subgroups overlap with the age groups in such a way that it is not possible to distinguish the effects on learning outcomes of age versus a girls' status in these 3 subgroups.[33]

EQ1a. What is the impact of the TEAM Girl Malawi intervention on girls' learning outcomes?

The quantitative analyses of EGRA and EGMA assessments show that girls perform at higher levels in mathematics than they do in reading. However, in qualitative analyses of girls' FGDs, improvements in literacy are mentioned far more frequently by respondents than improvements in numeracy. Girls reported improvements in key early reading skills, such as letter identification. They also reported acquiring pre-literacy skills, such as learning how to hold a writing instrument and writing their own names: 'I didn't even know how to write my own name, but now, I know how to write it'. Girls' reports of improvement in early literacy skills are consistent with the quantitative results; few girls were proficient in higher-level literacy—skills such as fluency or comprehension as measured by the EGRA — and few girls reported improvements in those skills. At least one focus group respondent perceived improvements in those skills, stating, 'For me when I was joining this CBE, I didn't know anything in reading, but now I know how to read…I know reading Chichewa and even some English words.' Notably, there were few references drawn from focus groups or interviews to improvements in numeracy, which stands in contrast to the quantitative EGMA results. A possible explanation for this perceived focus on literacy over numeracy could be that numeracy is more integrated into day-to-day life than literacy (e.g., visits to market).

> *'I didn't even know how to hold a pen but the teacher who were teaching us taught us everything including how to hold the pen and even how the letters are supposed to look'.*

Why are learners struggling to learn to read?

[33] This same consideration applies to these subgroups throughout the remainder of the baseline report.

Focus group respondents offered a number of explanations for low reading performance among the girls. Some of those explanations specifically referred to characteristics of the CBE's and their facilitators; others focused on factors specific to the girls. The evidence did not support any one explanation. Respondents themselves demonstrated confusion in explaining why learners might be struggling to learn to read.

The perceived low quality of the CBE facilitators was one explanation offered to explain why girls are struggling to learn to read. Despite teaching 4 days a week, some respondents mentioned that CBE facilitators were not full-time teachers. At least one facilitator listed farming as their main source of income rather than teaching. The CBE intervention is designed to rely on trained volunteers (and not formally trained teachers) who receive a stipend and teach a few hours each day; thus, it seems likely that the facilitators would have other professional responsibilities outside their work with the CBEs. Juggling multiple professional responsibilities could potentially have a negative impact on the quality of the CBE facilitator's work—or at least transmit the perception of a negative impact—although that does not necessarily need to be true.

Another possible quality issue that respondents raised was related to the preparation and tools provided to CBE facilitators to support the instruction of learners with disabilities. Learners with disabilities as measure by the external evaluators who used the Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions, comprised 37% of the girls in Cohort 1 and 40% of girls in Cohort 3.[34] Some CBE facilitators reported feeling confident in teaching learners with disabilities. For example, one CBE facilitator felt 'she has learnt a lot of new teaching techniques' which was making them able to handle working with those with disabilities, describing the result as 'learnt partially how she can take care of those who are disabled'. At the same time, other respondents reported less confidence in teaching learners with disabilities. For example, one respondent suggested that the project could do more to build the capacity of facilitators to support learners with disabilities, recommending that the project provide lessons to facilitators on how to teach girls with disabilities in ways that assured they would receive the same level of instruction as those without disabilities, stating, 'It is good to have the teachers have the lessons so that all the disabled children should also be reached '. When asked about the CBE facilitator experience, one respondent mentioned they also had a bad experience because they did not know how to handle learners who were disabled. She explained that the lessons that she went through to become a teacher did not cover such things. Respondents implicitly or explicitly stated that learners with disabilities could be better supported by TEAM Girl Malawi regarding the preparation of CBE facilitators.

Respondents offered the girls' qualities, characteristics, and behaviours in the project as another explanation for low reading performance. Absenteeism was one of the most frequently reported explanations for low performance. For example, girls who had dropped out of the program reported that they had a lack of knowledge about the TEAM Girl Malawi intervention and that this lack of knowledge was likely due to their poor attendance before dropping out. In contrast, internal project monitoring data suggests that girls with low attendance tend to perform at high levels of learning outcomes. This would refute the perception that absenteeism explains low reading performance. It may also indicate that facilitators don't have a clear understanding of the factors that are likely to explain low

[34] Beneficiary enrolment disability information was collected using the Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions, while baseline and midline disability prevalence was collected using the Washington Group/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning. Table 5 in Annex 12 indicates that the proportion of cohort 1 girls from the baseline with at least one domain of functional difficulty was 34.4% and 37.1% at midline, while the proportion of enrolled girls with at least one domain of functional difficulty was 8.5% at baseline. Similarly, the proportion of cohort 3 girls at midline (baseline for this cohort) with at least one difficulty was 40.3%, while enrolment data indicates that 30.5% of cohort 3 girls had at least one functional difficulty. Given that the question sets and methodologies differ between the 2 sources, analysts cannot compare the sample proportions to the midline populations. Results on the Child Functioning questions are used for all midline reporting.

performance in this project. The impact of absenteeism on performance is a topic that merits further exploration.

Some CBE facilitators suggested that the girls' low levels of schooling prior to joining the programme explained their struggles learning to read. When asked about their experience as a CBE facilitator, one respondent stated that they faced a number of bad experiences because the girls participating had never been in school prior to TEAM Girl Malawi. They went on to remark on the amount of work it took for the girls to know how to read the letter 'A' let alone how to read in general. Given that the target population of the programme is girls who had never attended school or had attended little school, the perception that this prevents girls from learning through TEAM Girl Malawi suggests some CBE facilitators may need more training and support.

3.2 Transition outcome

TEAM Girl Malawi's second outcome is a transition through key education, training or employment stages. This section will present midline findings that relate to the following indicators:

- 2.1 Percentage of highly marginalised girls who have transitioned into primary school
- 2.2 Percentage of highly marginalised girls who have transitioned into vocational training relevant to the pursuit of their career
- 2.3 Percentage of highly marginalised girls who have transitioned into safe, fairly paid employment or self-employment
- 2.4 Improved quality of life for girls who choose not to pursue vocational, business training or primary school pathways (defined according to domains identified by beneficiaries and stakeholders during baseline)

Transition Pathway Analysis by Cohort

Cohort 1

As stated previously, Team Girl Malawi offers girls three possible transitional pathways to pursue upon completion of the project: transition A is the option to return to primary school; transition B is the option to enrol in vocational training; and transition C is the engagement in entrepreneurship or employment. Young girls participating in the project are encouraged to return to primary school, whereas older girls are encouraged to pursue one of the three pathways. At the 2021 data collection point, girls in Cohort 1 were just completing their time in CBEs and were ready to transition. To measure transition, the girls' survey asked respondents to select which of the three programme transition pathway they would pursue after finishing CBE. Programme monitoring data may be used after midline to further triangulate these responses and examine if girls actually pursed the pathway they reported.

Overall, most girls in Cohort 1 indicated they would pursue vocational training (45.2%) or entrepreneurship/employment (42.9%).[35] Only 9.5% of Cohort 1 girls indicated pursuing primary school (see Table 13). Although girls were asked through the quantitative survey if they had chosen to pursue another pathway not offered through the TEAM Girl Malawi programme, none of the girls responded 'yes' to this question; in other words, all girls expressed an intention to pursue one of the pathways presented by the programme.

[35] See sampling section for a note on attrition in Cohort 1.

Differences in selected transition pathways were found when examining girls by geography and age.

Table 13: Cohort 1 transition pathways

Category	N	Transition Pathways			
		Transition A	Transition B	Transition C	
		Primary School	Skills or Vocational Training	Safe Employment with Adequate Salary	Self-employment
All Cohort 1	**210**	**9.5%**	**45.2%**	**2.4%**	**42.9%**
Lilongwe	18	27.8%*	61.1%	0.0%	11.1%
Dedza	117	7.7%	42.7%	3.4%	46.2%*
Mchinji	75	8.0%	45.3%	2.4%	45.3%*
Age 12-13	12	50.0%*	16.7%	0.0%	33.3%
Age 14-18	116	8.6%	44.0%	4.3%	43.1%
Age 19-21	78	2.6%	53.8%*	0.0%	43.6%
Subgroup					
Married and caregiver	43	2.3%	44.2%	0.0%	53.5%
Orphaned	55	7.3%	49.1%	1.8%	41.8%
Head of household	7	0.0%	57.1%	0.0%	42.9%
High chore burden	95	8.4%	45.3%	2.1%	44.2%
Girls with disabilities	76	7.9%	40.8%	3.9%	47.4%
Barrier[36]					
Bullying	19	10.5%	26.3%	0.0%	63.2%
Cost	184	9.8%	45.1%	2.7%	42.4%
Parent support	38	2.6%	42.1%	5.3%	50.0%
Menstruation	64	4.7%	39.1%	3.1%	53.1%
Food insecurity or hunger	134	8.2%	45.5%	2.2%	44.0%
School safety	62	4.8%	56.5%	0.0%	38.7%

Note: One asterisk (*) indicates that the proportion of a category of girls selecting a given pathway is significantly higher compared to other girls in that same category at $p<0.05$

Girls in Lilongwe were statistically significantly more likely to select re-enrolling in primary school than girls in the other two districts.[37] Girls in Dedza and Mchinji were more likely to

[36] Note that Barriers refers to barriers to accessing education as noted and categorized in the baseline report.

select self-employment compared to girls in Lilongwe. No clear explanation for this trend was found in the data, though programme staff indicate that fewer options were offered in Lilongwe. In Lilongwe, there was no vocational training pathway and entrepreneurship training was offered without the possibility of joining VSLs and accessing loans.

Although most girls did not report an intention to re-enrol in primary school, differences in the intended transition pathway appeared when considering the ages of the girls. A significantly higher proportion of girls aged 12–13 selected re-enrolling in primary school compared to other age groups. Girls aged 19–21 were significantly more likely than younger groups to select skills or vocational training. A chi-square test indicated that there was a significant association between age and the selected transition pathway. A significantly higher proportion of girls in transition group A (age 12–13 after two years of CBE) selected re-enrolling in primary school than other pathways. A significantly higher proportion of girls in transition group C (age 18–19 after two years of CBE) selected skills or vocational training than other pathways. One possible interpretation of this difference is that younger girls are closer to the typical age of a child enrolled in primary school, making that transition seem like a more attractive option in contrast to older girls. Another explanation is that girls under 16 are not eligible to join the other pathways.

Among those girls who selected primary school as their desired transition pathway, several factors influenced their decision. A majority of girls selecting primary school (82.6%) said they were interested in continuing their education after CBE. This suggests these girls possessed an internal motivation to attend primary school. Another internal motivation reported by 17.4% of those girls planning to attend primary school was the belief that girls should have a right to continue their education. In regard to external factors, 43.5% of girls said knowing the quality of education would be good influenced their decision. This is a useful finding, as it suggests improving the quality of primary education might attract more girls. Notably, no girls indicated that their family's interest in education was a factor that influenced their decision to pursue primary school.

Among those girls who selected vocational training, internal factors influenced their decision about their transition pathway. Roughly one-fifth (21.7%) said they were interested to pursue vocational training right after CBE. Another 3.1% said they felt girls should have a right to continue their education and so wanted to continue. However, different from those girls who selected primary school, girls who selected vocational training seemed to be influenced slightly more by external factors, including quality of vocational training (29.9%) and family and community support (2.1%). Overall, no factor seemed to influence a majority of girls who selected vocational training as their transition pathway.

Girls who selected entrepreneurship training, employment or self-employment listed several internal factors that influenced their decision. The large majority of girls who selected entrepreneurship as their transition pathway (77.3%) said employment or self-employment would give the girl more earning potential. A small minority of girls, 11.3%, said they were interested in pursuing their career after finishing CBE, and 1.0% said they thought girls had the right to work in safe and fair jobs. A small percentage of girls (2.1%) reported that external factors, specifically family and community support, influenced their decision to pursue entrepreneurship. Thus, the expectation of earning money surfaces as a key motivator that draws girls to the entrepreneurship pathway.

See Annex 12's Table 6 on page 145 for full details on Cohort 1 transition pathways.

[37] The quantitative survey asked girls of their intention to 're-enrol' in primary school and did not ask of their intention to enrol for the first time.

Cohort 3

At the 2021 data collection point, girls in Cohort 3 had not yet begun their time in CBEs, thus transition to another pathway was a prospect at least two years away. To measure intended transition, the girls' survey asked respondents to select which of the three programme transition pathways they would pursue after finishing CBE, a close-ended question. Programme monitoring data may be used after midline to further triangulate these responses.

As presented in Table 14, the largest proportion of girls of Cohort 3 — those just beginning their participation in the project—reported an intention to pursue skills or vocational training after finishing CBE in two years (49.2%). Moreover, there appears to be a trend in selection of transition pathways by age, with younger girls more frequently selecting primary re-enrolment and older girls more frequently selecting skills or vocational training or entrepreneurship/employment. For example, girls aged 10-16 were more likely to select re-enrolment in primary school than girls aged 17-19, who were more likely to select vocational training or employment. This emerging trend is similar to what was seen in Cohort 1.

Table 14: Cohort 3 transition pathways

Category	N	Transition Pathways			
		Transition A	Transition B	Transition C	
		Primary School	Skills / Vocational Training	Safe employment with adequate salary	Self-employment
All girls (Cohort 3)	**252**	**25.0%**	**49.2%**	**30.6%**	**33.3%**
Lilongwe	61	26.2%*	41.0%	26.2%	32.8%
Dedza	97	38.1%*	48.5%	27.8%	30.9%
Mchinji	94	10.6%	55.3%	36.2%	36.2%
Age 10–11	19	36.8%*	15.8%	31.6%	15.8%
Age 12–16	142	31.7%*	50.7%*	29.6%	29.6%
Age 17–19	91	12.1%	53.8%*	31.9%	42.9%
Subgroup					
Girls with disabilities	106	24.5%	56.6%*	24.5%	38.7%
Barrier					
Bullying	11	18.2%	63.6%	36.4%	27.3%
School cost	203	26.6%	50.2%	29.6%	32.5%
Parent support	61	26.2%	60.7%*	21.3%	41.0%
Menstruation	99	23.2%	46.5%	30.3%	30.3%
Food insecurity or hunger	127	33.9%*	46.5%	27.6%	34.6%
School safety	49	32.7%	42.9%	34.7%	34.7%

Note: One asterisk (*) indicates that the proportion of a category of girls selecting a given pathway is significantly higher compared to other girls in that same category at $p<0.05$

In addition to differences in transition pathways by age subgroups, some other subgroups showed differences broken down into: districts, disability, girls lacking parental support, and girls facing food insecurity. Girls in Lilongwe and Dedza were significantly more likely to select primary re-enrolment than girls in Mchinji but no clear explanation for this trend appeared in the data. Also, both girls with disabilities and girls lacking parental support for education were more likely to select skills or vocational training compared to other girls. For the first group, it seems likely that Malawian primary schools may not have adequate resources to meet the needs of girls with disabilities, making primary school a less attractive option. For the girls who reported a lack of parental support, their persistence in the project and tendency to select the vocational pathway might reflect a sense of self-efficacy or confidence drawn from their participation in TEAM Girl Malawi. Lastly, girls facing food insecurity were more likely to select re-enrolling in primary school than other girls.[38] Schools are often sites of feeding programmes, and this might be a factor that influences this subgroup of girls to find primary school a more attractive transition pathway.

See Annex 12's Tables 8 and 9 on page 146 for full details on Cohort 3 transition pathways.

EQ1b. What is the impact of the TEAM Girl Malawi intervention on girls' reported transition into primary school, vocational training, safe and fairly paid employment or another pathway?

Transition to Vocational Training or Entrepreneurship

As the quantitative data show, many girls who have completed the project have elected to transition into vocational training or entrepreneurship, particularly older girls. The results of FGDs and key informant interviews suggest that there may be strategies the TEAM Girl Malawi intervention could pursue to strengthen its mechanisms for supporting girls' transitions into these pathways.

When asked how common it is for girls to attend vocational or entrepreneurship training, some girls reported that it was common, particularly in the area of tailoring. Girls stated that they had chosen tailoring because it was useful both as a vocation and at home and some girls reported a desire to also teach tailoring to other girls. Notably, some girls reported that they imagined vocational training was a steppingstone to entrepreneurship. Girls also reported that offering vocational skills training through the project attracted parental support.

> Indeed the programme has affected the way the parents and community leaders think about girls and boys attending CBE because at first they did not have any idea on what would happen…they thought they will just learn at the CBE and it will end there…but after introducing the vocational skills, this has greatly encouraged the parents and they can see the parents eager to send more children to CBE.
>
> —Girls Focus Group Discussion

While some positive impacts of the vocational training were reported, some respondents reported the experience that the intervention was not living up to expectations to support girls in this transition. In vocational training, respondents stated that vocational training has not started yet, so girls interested in that pathway were stalled in their progress. Respondents commented little on specific fields of vocational training. One Agent of Change (AoC) did mention the fields of carpentry and tailoring, although TEAM Malawi programme staff stated that carpentry was not offered as a vocational option. The AoC reported that transition to vocational training in areas such as carpentry or tailoring would be complicated by the perception that the community did not believe such work fields were

[38] A girl is placed in this category if her household reports experiencing hunger 10 or more days per year.

appropriate for women. In entrepreneurship, respondents specifically identified that the TEAM Girl Malawi intervention had not provided the funds promised to girls to help them start businesses. For example, a respondent stated, 'Also, they were told that some of the girls will be given loans to start small scale businesses. They are yet to see this one happen, but she said that this will also be very effective if fulfilled because it will be good for the girls to get money. They will be able to buy soap, find the money for food so this can assist them'. At least one respondent expressed concern that a delay in providing funds for girls to start businesses would result in the girls engaging in risky behaviour, stating, 'The TEAM Girl Malawi needs to be doing things…that's giving the adolescents the things they promised to give them when they finish their CBE learning for example businesses that they were promised to be helped with. Delay in the provision of such skills and initiatives will make those adolescents go back to their old gambling behaviours'. The perception that the TEAM Girl Malawi intervention is not adequately supporting girls' transition to entrepreneurship or vocational training was reported by multiple respondents, but because focus group data is not representative, how widespread this perception is remains unknown. Furthermore, this challenge is likely related to communication, rather than fulfilment of programme commitments; the programme did not commit to automatically providing girls with funds but rather offered girls eligibility to receive loans after meeting a set of conditions and criteria. However, the perception could be problematic for meeting project objectives, given that many girls express that vocational or entrepreneurship training is their expected transition pathway. It appears that some respondents have higher expectations for vocational and entrepreneurship training than might be reasonable, according to the design of the project. The project also might benefit from increased socialisation of the project's activities in vocational and entrepreneurship training to mitigate misperceptions.

Transition to Primary School

As reported above, only a small proportion of girls aged 17–19 express an intention to transition to primary education. Several possible explanations could be offered, including that older girls may feel uncomfortable transitioning to primary school due to their age. Given the TEAM Girl Malawi project's intention to prepare all girls for their desired transition, ensuring that there is support to help girls transition to primary education is important for the project's success. Respondents shared some perceptions that suggest the alignment between CBE and primary school may not be adequate to support that transition.

This perceived misalignment between the CBE curriculum and the primary school curriculum was one of the themes that respondents shared. For example, one respondent stated, 'that there should be more content in the CBE for proper transitioning from CBE to primary education' and 'there should be a detailed syllabus so that when they are transitioning to primary, there should be no problem'. Respondents did not mention specific aspects of the curricula that are misaligned, and a thorough examination of both curricula would be necessary to identify and fill gaps. Project documents suggest that alignment with the primary school curriculum *is* a part of the development of the CBE curriculum, to which MoEST officials contributed; however, even though the curricula may be well-aligned, the existence of this perception among community members could be something to address through an additional review of the curriculum and/or improved communications.

Another aspect of misalignment identified in focus groups and interviews related to the role of the National MoEST in transitioning girls from CBE to primary education. National MoEST officials expressed a commitment to supporting the transition stating, 'As a ministry, the doors are open for children who have gone through this initiative to join the primary schools, allowing them to transition because they work together to ensure that they are prepared to transition'. However, despite demonstrating an understanding that CBE graduates should move to Standard 5, national officials also stated that due to absenteeism and other factors,

some might need to go to Standard 3 or 4. This might demonstrate a heightened awareness of national officials that marginalised adolescent girls may need more targeted support for their unique needs when they transition back to primary school. Alternatively, it might suggest that national officials do not expect the CBE programme to impact girls' learning outcomes adequately or question the commitment of the girls involved. Furthermore, it is unclear if the national officials are committed to the project beyond simply ensuring that primary schools admit CBE graduates, as respondents mainly focused on that component. This might suggest some fragility for the long-term sustainability of the project. The project might benefit from further discussion with the national officials to explore how best to support girls' transition into primary school and how to ensure their long-term success.

> 'Policies, in terms of the CBE, are the Readmission Policy because there is this policy environment which allows for learners to go back to school. So, for CBE after they have gone through the curriculum, they are given the opportunity to go back to school, the doors are open and even the primary schools are aware that they need to readmit learners that are willing to come back to school.'

EQ2. What are the factors that contribute to or detract from marginalised girls' transition into education, training or employment?

EQ2a. How does the quality of education influence girls' transition?

As mentioned previously, perceptions of the quality of education seem to influence transition. Multiple respondents mentioned that they see improved reading among girls and that those improvements encourage other children. Respondents specifically mentioned that the perception of improved reading encouraged other children to join the TEAM Girl Malawi project. Allowing new participants into the project does not happen in all communities. However, program implementers report that Cohort 2 ran again in 24/40 existing cohort 1 communities and cohort 3 ran in 17/25 existing cohort 1 and 2 communities and suggest that embedding the project in the same community could have a positive impact. The quality of TEAM Girl Malawi as measured by reading outcomes does seem to influence girls' transition, according to respondents.

EQ2b. How do gender perceptions and norms influence girls' transition?

Respondents suggested that gender did influence girls' transition and, largely, the responses indicated a negative influence. Respondents mentioned that sexual relationships and resulting pregnancies prevented girls from transitioning, particularly because it was reported that men do not generally feel it is appropriate for pregnant women to attend school—this was not reported about the transition to other pathways. Respondents also indicated that initiation ceremonies could be to blame for girls' failure to transition.

EQ2c. How does community support for girls' education influence girls' transition?

Community support for girls' education was not frequently reported as a positive factor in influencing girls' transition. Instead, respondents reported that parental disinterest or 'laziness' was an example of how communities negatively influenced girls' transition. Also, community members demonstrated a general—although not in-depth—awareness of the TEAM Girl Malawi project. For example, it was reported that one community leader indicated that the main activity that has been introduced in the community since 2019 is that they have taken dropout girls to be taught at one particular place. She stated, 'Apart from that, the girls then are given porridge to encourage them to get to school. Also, the girls are being taught through different techniques like songs…'.

Overall, it seems that the quality of education is likely to positively influence girls' transition, while gender norms and a lack of community support seem to have a negative influence on girls' transition. The frailty of community support may be problematic in that it could both influence girls' transition in the short term and challenge the sustainability of the TEAM Girl Malawi project in the long term. The findings are useful to project improvement as they indicate areas in which more efforts could be made to socialise the project to communities or find ways to involve community members more deeply in the programming itself.

Why have girls dropped out?

For those girls who have dropped out of the TEAM Girl Malawi project, both internal and external forces are provided to explain leaving.[39] The main internal force reported by respondents is a lack of interest in learning, which was one of the most common answers to explain dropping out. This response merits some additional exploration since it seems unlikely that girls with little or no interest in learning would bother to join the project. One possible interpretation of this response is that a segment of girls does not feel the learning offered through the TEAM Girl Malawi project is compelling enough to remain.

Regarding the external forces that explain girls' decisions to drop out, a need to engage in income generation, lack of parental support, and the timing of the classes were the top responses. Unsurprisingly, adolescent girls might feel pressured to generate income rather than studying. This is a common challenge in Malawi and probably even more essential due to the global health pandemic and the marginalisation characteristics of TEAM Girl Malawi learners. Given the broader comments on a lack of parental or community support mentioned earlier, lack of parental support is also an unsurprising finding. However, one notable aspect of parental support is its overlap with generating income. This quote from an AoC is a typical answer that resembles similar statements from Mothers Group members, community members and other AoCs: 'lack of parental guidance and encouragement towards education as they just expected that those taking part in CBE will be receiving things. If their children don't receive anything, e.g., maize from the CBE, they tell them to stay at home as there is no benefit, which makes them drop out'. This finding may suggest that the programme could do more to help girls and families understand the benefits of CBE beyond short term financial or material rewards. The last external force that was cited to explain dropout was related to the timing of classes; some girls reported that classes should have been held in the morning rather than the afternoon. There appeared to be a stigma attached to afternoon classes. Given that the practice of the project was to work with beneficiaries to establish the most appropriate times for classes to take place, more monitoring may be necessary to ensure that practice is happening at all sites.

Transition Outcomes by Cohort

Cohort 1

When examining the girls in Cohort 1 as a single group, midline data analyses showed that Cohort 1 girls demonstrated an overall (albeit slight) improvement in literacy, as measured by the EGRA. One could theorise that there would be qualities or characteristics associated with girls who select one of the three possible transition pathways (primary school, Vocational Training (B) or Entrepreneurship Training(C). However, no statistically significant differences in learning outcomes were detected among girls who selected primary school, B or C.

[39] See Quantitative Sample section for more on attrition. Of the Cohort 1 baseline sample, approximately 70% were still enrolled at midline.

Given that child protection is an essential factor that can influence girls' academic, professional and personal success, it seems likely that child protection measures might be related to girls' transition or other outcomes. Analyses showed that a statistically significantly higher proportion of girls in transition group A (return to primary school) were in households that showed improvement in child protection than girls in transition group B (planning to attend vocational school or skills training). Earlier analyses also found that younger girls were more likely to make up transition group A; it raises the possibility that there may be an overlap between age, child protection and transition pathway. The hypothesis that could explain this is that parents of younger girls might be more invested in child protection. Selection of the transition pathway to primary school is also related to reporting abuse; a significantly lower proportion of girls that pursued primary school (0.0%) showed an increase in agreement that they would report abuse if they experienced it than did girls who select to transition to vocational training or entrepreneurship/employment.

See Annex 12's Tables 6 and 7 on pages 145-146 for additional details about Cohort 1 transition outcomes and trends.

Cohort 3

Among Cohort 3 girls, those planning to attend primary school had significantly lower mean EGRA and EGMA scores than those planning to pursue vocational training or entrepreneurship/employment. This finding raises the question of whether this group of girls is aware of their low literacy and numeracy performance and, because of that, has a higher motivation to return to formal schooling to obtain those skills. The midline focus group and survey tools did not explicitly inform nor ask girls about their knowledge of their EGRA or EGMA scores so this may be an area for further exploration going forward. Another factor to consider is that girls in planning to attend primary school tend to be of the younger age cohorts; given their age, it seems reasonable that these girls have lower mean EGRA and EGMA scores than those planning to pursue vocational training or entrepreneurship/employment.

Among Cohort 3, a significantly higher proportion of girls planning to pursue vocational training or entrepreneurship/employment were designated as possessing high life skills than those planning to attend primary school. Again, because those girls encouraged to attend primary school tend to be younger, it is possible that they simply have fewer years or less opportunity outside of the TEAM Girl Malawi activities aimed at addressing life skills to hone life skills because younger girls seem likely to spend more time under the control of caregivers. Another possible explanation is that girls intending to pursue vocational training or entrepreneurship dedicate themselves more earnestly to acquiring life skills, which could be considered more essential to successfully transitioning to those pathways. A final notable finding of the outcome by transition group is that a significantly higher proportion of girls planning to pursue vocational training were from households with a high child protection score (as measured by IO 3.2) as compared to girls planning to pursue the other two pathways. No clear explanation for this trend is posited.

See Annex 12's Tables 8 and 9 on pages 146-147 for additional details about Cohort 3 transition outcomes and trends.

3.3 Sustainability outcome

Midline evidence on Outcome 3 Sustainability is presented in the following section for system, community and learning space indicators and primarily draws upon qualitative data.

System

EQ3a. To what extent are TEAM Girl Malawi activities embedded in CBE and MoEST and MoGCDSW processes, structure and staff capacities?

Respondents showed that TEAM Girl Malawi activities are embedded in community-level and district-level processes, structure and staffing, but the same is not reflected at the national— MoEST and MoGCDSW—level. First, there was a knowledge gap running in both directions: community-level respondents knew little about national or Ministry-level involvement with TEAM Girl Malawi and likewise, the national level respondents knew little about the community-level work of the project.

For example, community-level respondents did not talk about either Ministry in their responses; some were not familiar with the MoGCDSW. A TEAM Girl Malawi education official reported he could not describe MoEST papers or policies related to CBE models that reach the most marginalised. Generally, community and district level officials could only describe the MoEST's involvement in TEAM Girl Malawi by referring to the MoEST's role in allowing the project to function in the country. For example, one district official stated, 'The ministry has helped in the change by allowing the organisation to work with it. This has led to the relief of the government through these development partners on the school dropout that they are in schools and achieve the same goal'.

National-level stakeholders who were interviewed demonstrated little knowledge of TEAM Girl Malawi, as was stated previously. One MoEST respondent was able to state that they were 'sure' that district level stakeholders were involved in TEAM Girl Malawi as the extent of their knowledge of the project. In contrast, district officials did seem to work hand-in-hand with the project staff and were more clearly embedded in project processes. As one district official said, said, 'we are part of these teams as they train the facilitators and as we work with the communities, they are always together, and they are making an impact together so they can't leave them outside. They are just one in the work'.

Community

3.3c: Percentage of girls who believe they would be supported if they report abuse

Results from the external midline quantitative survey found that a majority of both cohorts reported believe they would be supported if they report abuse; 93.9% of Cohort 1 girls and 88.4% of Cohort 3 girls, respectively. Results from internal data found improvements in the knowledge and skills among surveyed Cohort 1 community members in the area of child protection. TfaC used a questionnaire containing a mix of questions designed to sample participant's knowledge and attitude on key areas of child protection. Results showed that the percentage of participants from Mothers Groups and CP stakeholders surveyed demonstrated improved knowledge and attitudes improved from baseline to midline (6% variance among Mothers Groups and 17% variance among CP Stakeholders). More details are available in Table 15 of Annex 12 on page 155.

EQ3b. To what extent do communities demonstrate ownership over improving education for girls in TEAM Girl Malawi target areas?

Respondents were largely positive when asked to what extent communities demonstrate ownership over improving education for girls in TEAM Girl Malawi target areas. Nearly all respondents felt optimistic about community ownership over improving education for girls. Respondents were often able to cite specific examples of community engagement. This trend was especially visible in community-level interviews. For example, one respondent stated, 'The parents are making sure that they advise their children to go to school and to do

vocational skills compared to what they were doing before'. Notably, respondents gave examples of the ways in which community-based institutions or organisations were directly involved in the processes of TEAM Girl Malawi, including Mothers Groups and Village Development Committees. The former was noted for its role in reaching out to parents whose children are not in school to encourage them to attend. Multiple respondents mentioned the latter as a key venue for successfully encouraging girls' education (a demonstration of changing gender norms). It was reported that community members in one location were so active in their support of TEAM Girl Malawi that they followed up with absent learners and had successfully intervened to withdraw 4 CBE-enrolled girls from early marriages. However, one respondent suggested that community support for the project might be short-lived:

> *'They experience community withdrawal from the programme. At the beginning of the programme, chiefs and community at large accept the programme, but they withdraw as it progresses. People regard the programme as not useful anymore; they stop sending their children to CBE. This puts pressure on them and the facilitators to be following up the children in the villages instead of teaching at the CBE since they are the ones who know the location of the learners'.*

In earlier analyses in this document, respondents reported that community support or engagement in TEAM Girl Malawi is low and, in some cases, negative. The difference in respondents' experiences related to community support or engagement in the project suggests that experiences are complex.

4. Key intermediate outcome findings

Midline results related to the following TEAM Girl Malawi IOs are presented in this section:

- IO 1.1 Percentage of beneficiaries, teachers, educators and caregivers who report that barriers to regular attendance have been reduced as a result of support received
- IO 1.2 Average attendance rate of girls and boys with identified marginalisation characteristics at CBEs/Girls' Clubs
- IO 1.3 Average attendance rate of girls and boys with identified marginalisation characteristics at vocational and business training programmes
- IO 2.1 Percentage of CBE Facilitators practising gender-responsive pedagogy & inclusive and child-centred teaching methodologies
- IO 2.2 Percentage of Agents of Change practising gender-responsive pedagogy & inclusive and child-centred teaching methodologies
- IO 2.3 Percentage of stakeholders who demonstrate change in gender perceptions and gender-sensitive teaching reported by trained stakeholders (head teachers, CBE facilitators, NRP teachers)
- IO 3.1 Percentage of girls who show an increase in reporting feeling safe at CBEs
- IO 3.2 Percentage of community members who show improvement in support for child protection
- IO 3.3 Percentage of households who demonstrate improved support for girls' education through CBEs and primary schools

- IO 3.4 Percentage of girls who report an increase in 'agreeing they would report abuse if they experienced it'

4.1 Key intermediate outcome findings

IO 1.1 Percentage of beneficiaries, teachers, educators and caregivers who report that barriers to regular attendance have been reduced as a result of support received

Of all 451 stakeholders, 89.1% reported that some barriers to regular attendance had been removed. Only those community members who were not directly involved in the project reported that barriers had not been removed.[40] Ultimately, those that know the project best reported positively on its impact on barriers to regular attendance.

Among all Cohort 1 girls, 96.3% reported that the barriers studied had been removed. Analyses showed that girls that reported barriers had been removed tended to perform better in learning outcomes in both proficiency and growth than those girls who reported barriers had not been removed.[41] Those girls had a mean midline aggregated EGRA score of 39.6, compared to 30.5 for the remaining girls who did not report barriers had been removed. Similarly, girls who reported removed barriers had a mean aggregated EGMA score of 57.0, compared to 45.7 for girls who did not report barriers had been removed. Similarly, 87.4% of girls who reported that barriers had been removed showed improved EGRA scores, compared with 75.0% of girls who did not report barrier reductions. On the EGMA, 85.9% of girls who reported removed barriers showed improvement, compared to 75.0% of girls who did not report barrier reductions.

Cohort 1 girls reported a reduction of 1.3 barriers to regular attendance, caregivers reported a reduction of 1.7, and CBE facilitators reported a reduction of 5.5 barriers. The most frequently cited reduced barriers to attendance included:

- Top barriers reduced by the project selected by girls: not having money for school (36.3%);[42] needing to work (14.6%); and having a child/being pregnant (10.4%).
- Top barriers reduced by the project selected by caregivers: not having money for school (51.3%); the girl needing to work (21.2%); and the girls' health condition preventing attendance (11.4%)
- Top barriers reduced by the project selected by CBE facilitators: not having money for school (55.0%) and the girl having a child/being pregnant (40.0%).

It is notable that CBE facilitators report a higher number of barriers reduced (5.5) than girls or caregivers. CBE facilitators are exposed to many girls and have a broad perspective on the barriers they are facing, which might explain this difference. Girls and caregivers may report the reduction of perceived barriers from a narrow perspective, focusing mainly on their individual or familial experience.

Respondents were also asked which project activities contributed to reducing barriers to attendance. These included:

[40] The sense of barriers to attendance being removed was calculated based on data from one question on Cohort 1 girls survey, the household survey and the CBE facilitators survey, which asks if barriers to attendance had been removed. STS merged these responses to get overall response rate, as well as rates by stakeholder type—girls, caregivers, CBE facilitators and community members not engaged in the project.

[41] In this midline report, proficiency refers to the average aggregate score on EGMA or EGRA; growth refers to the percentage of girls showing improvement on EGMA or EGRA between baseline and midline.

[42] The survey question on reduction of barrier for not having money for school was specifically asked about formal school and not CBE, as CBE cost is free.

- Top project activities contributing to barrier reduction according to girls: take-home work to practice learning outside of lessons (48.6%); teachers accommodating learners needing extra support (39.6%); flexible location of CBE and Girls' Clubs (36.3%); small groups/study circles during COVID-19 closures (35.6%); and flexible timing of CBE and Girls' Clubs (29.7%).

- Top project activities contributing to barrier reduction according to caregivers: provision of childcare at CBE (39.4%); flexibility of location (32.1%) and timing (32.6%); teachers accommodating learners needing extra support (29.0%); and take-home work (23.8%).

See Annex 12's Table 10 on page 147 for additional details on reports in reductions to barriers to attendance.

EQ4a. How have TEAM Girl Malawi interventions affected girls' attendance?

When asked how TEAM Girl Malawi interventions affected girls' attendance, respondents commonly cited absenteeism as a major problem. Absenteeism was offered as an explanation for poor outcomes among learners. Although reported data indicates that some barriers to attendance have been alleviated for some girls, absenteeism continues to be perceived as a problem for girls participating in the project.

EQ4b. How have TEAM Girl Malawi interventions affected the quality of education at the institutions where they take place (if located in an institution)?

Respondents recognised the great emphasis the project has placed on supporting/integrating children with disabilities and its role in contributing to a quality education. For instance, one respondent said, 'The programme has really helped in the community as has helped to reveal those disabled that were kept in houses instead of going to school. Disabled children know that they have the right to education, and to play. They are now visited by their friends and play'. Some respondents also suggested that TEAM Girl Malawi could still improve at meeting the needs of learners with disabilities. These responses come especially from community-level respondents, including this CBE facilitator who stated: 'The challenges they meet at the CBE as the facilitators are failing to handle children with disabilities for example those with hearing problems, they fail to help them accordingly since they don't have special needs teaching skills to help them handling such challenges'. The varied responses regarding the quality of education as it relates to children with disabilities highlights the complexity of changing practices around educating this population of girls.

Another perspective on how TEAM Girl Malawi interventions have affected the quality of education is revealed by internal monitoring data drawn from observations of facilitator and AoC practice. Link Education staff, the Ministry of Education and National Reading Program teachers conduct regular lesson observations and feedback for CBE facilitators. The most recent MoE monitoring visit in Nov 2021 observed 18 facilitators in cohort 1 and 2 to consider their inclusive teaching methodologies and provide support. The report found that 72% of facilitators were using gender responsive pedagogy and all created a positive learning atmosphere. Between 2019 and 2021, TfaC staff observed 31 agents of change (AoC) and found 24 were demonstrating gender responsive and child centred teaching methodologies. AoCs were observed on their knowledge, skills and attitudes, indicators that were used to form a composite score. AoCs were deemed to have demonstrated gender responsive and child centred teaching methodologies if they scored 65% or more overall. Of the 24 found to be demonstrating appropriate methodologies, the average composite score was 68%. These data suggest that the TEAM Girl Malawi interventions have affected the

quality of education at the institutions where those AoCs work, which could bode well for sustainability. Another proxy for quality of education is offered by the internal observational data TfaC collected to measure self-confidence and improvements in knowledge, attitudes and skills in the area of sexual and reproductive health among enrolled girls. The internal observational tools, administered by TfaC, captured participants' ability to demonstrate the correct steps of male and female condom use; their ability to offer SRHR advice to a friend in a role play scenario; and the quality of their responses as a result of the 'Saying No to Sex' role play. Findings showed that girls improved in both self-confidence and SRHR; the variance in self-confidence from baseline to endline for Cohort 1 (measured at the project's midline) was 43% and the variance in SRHR over the same time period was 31% (See Annex 5 on pages 9 to 12 for more details.)

IO 1.2 Average attendance rate of girls and boys with identified marginalisation characteristics at CBEs or Girls' Clubs

Attendance was originally theorized as a key factor in the success of the TEAM Girl Malawi project. Without regular attendance, it seems unlikely that the project will result in meaningful improvements for girls. Internal monitoring data for November 2021—the same period during which external data on attendance was collected for this midline analysis—found an overall aggregate attendance rate of 70.76%.[43] Attendance ranged from a high of 95% during this period at the Dedza/Kazembe location to a low of 26 at the Lilongwe/Kamkodola location. Notably, programme staff report that internal project monitoring data has found a trend showing that high-performing learners often also have low attendance. The explanation of this finding is as yet unclear and is not fully supported by the midline findings in this report. However, these discrepancies could be explained by the innovative ways in which the project has aimed to reach girls wherever they are, particularly during the global health pandemic. They could also be explained by the age of the high-performing girls, who tend to be older. It is possible that older girls require less in person attendance to yield the same or better results. More exploration of attendance may be a worthwhile endeavour.

For the midline conducted by external evaluators, CBE facilitators were surveyed to create an estimate of attendance.[44] CBE facilitators were asked to estimate what percentage of learners in each marginalisation category attended CBE regularly, defined as at least once per week (Table 15).

Table 15: Mean estimated percentage of girls and boys in marginalisation categories regularly attending CBE

Category	Girls				Boys			
	Overall Mean	Lilongwe	Dedza	Mchinji	Overall Mean	Lilongwe	Dedza	Mchinji
Poverty	**80.1%**	86.0%	79.2%	76.0%	**82.8%**	92.0%	81.1%	77.0%
Married	**55.0%**	33.6%	63.2%	59.8%	**22.2%**	6.0%	24.4%	34.0%
High chore burden	**49.2%**	25.0%	67.3%	37.0%	**49.6%**	34.0%	61.1%	42.0%
Orphan	**48.1%**	26.0%	50.7%	65.0%	**48.0%**	34.0%	55.0%	47.8%

[43] Internal monitoring data on attendance is drawn from the Team Girl Malawi dashboard. Data queries were run via the dashboard in June 2022.

[44] TEAM Girl Malawi tracks attendance daily and reports on this indicator separately using their monitoring data. Estimates are provided here for context at midline.

Category	Girls				Boys			
	Overall Mean	Lilongwe	Dedza	Mchinji	Overall Mean	Lilongwe	Dedza	Mchinji
Primary caregiver	**44.6%**	22.2%	46.1%	64.0%	**18.1%**	2.0%	27.6%	15.0%
Head of household	**38.8%**	6.4%	55.4%	38.0%	**33.9%**	2.0%	57.8%	18.0%
Functional difficulty	**34.8%**	12.6%	34.2%	58.0%	**42.4%**	26.0%	44.4%	54.6%

CBE facilitators estimated that learners in the poverty category—those who did not have enough income to meet basic needs—were the most regular attendees. Like the finding above showing the relationship between performance and attendance, this is also somewhat surprising as girls living in poverty may need to work, which could negatively impact attendance. However, this could also be a notable success of the TEAM Girl Malawi project, indicating it successfully attracts and incentivises this marginalised group to attend regularly. In contrast, the lowest mean attendance was among learners who are the head of their household. TEAM Girl Malawi may want to consider alternative strategies to accommodate learners in this position, such as increased opportunities for home-based or distance education or incentives to attend. Another notable finding is that the attendance rates in Lilongwe tend to be lower than the attendance rates in Dedza and Mchinji in all categories other than those living in poverty. While no clear explanations for this pattern was found in the data, a possible explanation could be that girls find more competing opportunities in the capital city than in other locations.

IO 1.3 Average attendance rate of girls and boys with identified marginalisation characteristics at vocational and business training programmes

The average attendance rate of girls and boys with identified marginalisation characteristics attending vocational and business trainings programmes will be reported at endline.

IO 2.1 Percentage of CBE facilitators practising gender-responsive pedagogy & inclusive and child-centred teaching methodologies (GRPICCT)

A cornerstone of the TEAM Girl Malawi approach is that girls would benefit from gender-responsive pedagogy and inclusive and child-centred teaching methodologies. For the midline data collection, seven different indicators of gender-responsive pedagogy and inclusive and child-centred teaching methodologies were collected: (i) participatory teaching methods; (ii) activities for different learning styles; (iii) differentiated teaching; (iv) building learners' confidence; (v) young peoples' learning; (vi) TALULAR; and (vii) teaching learners with special needs. If facilitators demonstrated any of these, they were counted towards the constructs of gender-responsive pedagogy & inclusive and child-centred teaching methodologies (GRPICCT).

Overall, an average of 80.0% of the sampled CBE facilitators reported at least one element of GRPICCT teaching methods (Table 16). The lowest proportion was in Lilongwe (40.0%), and the highest was in Mchinji (100.0%). TEAM Girl Malawi may need to intensify its capacity building in these areas in Lilongwe. The most cited method used was activities for different learning styles (80%), particularly notable given TEAM Girl Malawi's interest in supporting girls with learning disabilities. The least commonly cited was young peoples' learning (30%).

It is essential to note that the data for this indicator is based on reports of 20 sampled CBE facilitators, not the whole population of CBE facilitators. However, the finding that most CBE

facilitators are demonstrating at least one element of gender-responsive pedagogy and inclusive and child-centred teaching methodologies is in line with the internal data findings.

Table 16: Mean estimated percentage of CBE facilitators practising GRPICCT

Category	N	% Practicing at least one element of GRPICCT methods	Mean number of GRPICCT methods practiced (of 7)[45]
Overall	**20**	**80.0%**	**4.7**
Mchinji	5	100.0%	6.6
Dedza	10	90.0%	5.1
Lilongwe	5	40.0%	1.8

IO 2.2 Percentage of Agents of Change practising gender-responsive pedagogy & inclusive and child-centred teaching methodologies

As mentioned earlier in the section on quality education, in an earlier data collection activity internal to the project collected between July 2019 and October 2021, data showed that of 31 AoCs observed by TfaC staff, 24 were assessed to be demonstrating gender responsive and child centred teaching methodologies. Observational data was collected on 19 different indicators in three domains: general information, knowledge, and participant assessment. This data found that 73% of those observed were determined to be demonstrating child centred teaching pedagogy.

IO 2.3 Percentage of stakeholders who demonstrate change in gender perceptions and gender-sensitive teaching reported by trained stakeholders (head teachers, CBE facilitators, NRP teachers)

Of the CBE facilitators sampled, 90% reported that their perceptions of gender had changed. This was slightly higher in Lilongwe and Mchinji (100.0%) and slightly lower in Dedza (80.0%).[46] Notably, 100% of CBE Facilitators in Lilongwe reported their gender perceptions had changed, and just 40% reported practising at least one GRPICCT methodology. This suggests that there may be some barriers to CBE facilitators implementing the GRPICCT methodology, even if their perceptions of gender have been changed.

A slightly higher proportion of CBE facilitators in Lilongwe and Mchinji were grouped in the high score category on the gender perceptions index (60%, respectively). Only 40.0% of facilitators in Dedza were grouped in the high score category. Mchinji had the highest average score (10.4), and Dedza had the lowest (8.7). These differences were not statistically significant (see Annex 12, Table 11 on page 149).

IO 3.1 Percentage of girls who show an increase in reporting feeling safe at CBEs

Nearly a quarter (22.2%) of Cohort 1 girls who responded at baseline and midline (6 of 27) showed an increased sense of feeling safe at school or CBE (at baseline, the question asked about feeling safe at school rather than CBE).[47] All (100%) of these girls came from

[45] The CBE survey asked facilitators to indicate if they practiced any of the following: Participatory teaching methods; Activities for different learning styles (auditory, visual, kinaesthetic); Differentiated teaching; Building learners' confidence; Young people's learning; TALULAR; Teaching students with special needs.

[46] This indicator was calculated as follows: The survey asked CBE facilitators if gender perceptions had changed since starting the project. STS also calculated a gender perceptions index using 4 items, calculated on a scale of 0–12. The mean score was 9.3, and this score was used as a cut-off to group facilitators into 'high scores' and 'low scores'.

[47] This indicator was calculated as follows: This item comes from one question on the girls' survey administered at baseline and again at midline. Girls were asked if they felt safe at CBEs. The question is calculated using only responses from Cohort 1

Mchinji. Most girls (77.8%) reported no change in feeling safe at CBEs; this suggests that either most girls may have already felt safe or that the project could improve its efforts to foster a feeling of safety among participants. Since 100% of girls who reported an increased sense of feeling safe came from Mchinji, it might be helpful for the project to look more carefully into the safety practices in that region and whether those practices were related to the improved sense of feeling safe, so that they could potentially be adopted more broadly.

See Annex 12's Table 12 on page 149 for additional details and how answers correspond with EGRA and EGMA scores.

IO 3.2 Percentage of community members who show improvement in support for Child Protection (baseline indicator IO 4.2)

TfaC internal monitoring data collected information on the rate at which community members reported child protection concerns. The data showed that the percentage of child protection concerns reported by community members excluding AOCs and facilitators (who are community members but also receive a stipend to work for the project) was 10.10%. When AOCs and facilitators were included, that percentage was 81.11%. The percentage of cases of which the District Social Welfare Officers held complex case reviews was 30.62%. In July 2021, the program implementers conducted Key Informant Interviews with a random sampled size of 9 District Social Welfare Office (DSWOs) was drawn from the from all three districts. 100% of the respondents agreed that they have seen positive changes in their work to safeguard and protect children from abuse as a result of working with TfaC. Respondents indicated that the work of TfaC with the District Social Welfare Office has maximized the impact of the work in the communities that TEAM girl is working because the DSWO were provided with logistics like fuel or transportation to enable them conduct different activities towards protecting children, including child protection services, home visits, referrals and other services.

The midline external evaluation team also collected data on community members and child protection. Overall, 34.5% of households surveyed showed improvement in support for child protection.[48] At baseline, the mean household score was 2.6 of 3.0. At midline, the mean had risen to 2.8 of 3.0. A statistically significantly higher proportion of households with girls aged 14–18 showed improvement (53.2%) than did households with girls aged 19–21 (26.4%).

Generally, girls in households that showed improvement in support for CP had lower mean aggregated midline EGRA and EGMA scores than girls in households where there was no improvement. Because improvement in support for CP is likely greater in younger girls, the lower mean aggregated midline EGRA and EGMA scores could be related to age rather than CP specifically.

See Annex 12's Table 13 on page 151 for additional details and how answers corresponding with EGRA and EGMA scores.

girls who answered both baseline and midline surveys. Note that at baseline, this question was phrased 'Do you feel safe at school' and was only asked of girls who had been to school previously—27 girls of the whole sample.

[48] This indicator was calculated as follows: STS used values from the household survey to create a child protection (CP) index. As at baseline, the CP index was created from two items on the household surveys that were combined into a single score ranging from 0 to 3. Caregivers were asked their level of agreement with two items: Q101 - If I saw or learned about abuse against a child, I would report it; and Q102 - If I saw or learned about abuse against a child, I would know to whom or where to report it.

IO 3.3 Percentage of households who demonstrate improved support for girls' education through CBEs and primary schools (baseline IO 4.3)

Overall, a small percentage (5.5%) of households showed improvement in support for girls' education at the midline. The baseline mean household score was 10.1 of 15.0. At midline, the mean was 7.3 of 15.0.[49] This represents a drop in the mean household score for support for girls' education at midline, although the difference was not statistically significant. There is no clear explanation for this apparent drop in the mean household score for support for girls' education between baseline and midline, suggesting an area for further emphasis in programming and research going forward. Also, a higher proportion of households where parental support for education was identified as a barrier showed improvement in support for girls' education (18.5%) at the midline. This finding was statistically significant and could suggest that TEAM Girl Malawi activities appropriately target the most vulnerable households—in this case, those where parental support has been identified as a barrier.

In contrast, a lower proportion (2.6%) of households where food security was an issue showed improvement in support for girls' education. This finding was statistically significant. In households experiencing food insecurity, there may be more support for girls' working than pursuing education, as a strategy for bringing in funds to buy food. The TEAM Girl Malawi project may want to consider additional strategies for supporting girls from food-insecure households.

See Annex 12's Table 14 on page 153 for additional details and how answers corresponding with EGRA and EGMA scores.

IO 3.4 Percentage of girls who report an increase in 'agreeing they would report abuse if they experienced it'

At midline, 14.4% of Cohort 1 girls who responded at baseline and midline (29 of 202) showed an increase in agreeing that they would report abuse if they experienced it.[50] A significantly higher proportion (23.8%) of girls aged 14–18 showed an increase in agreement that they would report abuse if they experienced it. Likewise, a statistically significantly higher proportion of girls with disabilities and girls who were bullied showed increased agreement that they would report abuse if they experienced it (21.6% and 33.3%, respectively).

Concluding Thoughts

The qualitative data provided a wealth of clear, unequivocal responses about how child protection had improved since TEAM Girl Malawi began operating. Community-level interviews suggest that improving child protection is where community members have most clearly felt the project's impact. Respondents provided detailed, specific examples and stories which make this one of the most dependable, evidence-supported areas of the qualitative investigation.

In addition, the girls who had dropped out of the project displayed much less knowledge of child abuse or reporting in their focus group, which suggests the project has had an impact

[49] This indicator was calculated using values from the girls' survey and the household survey to create a support for education index. Index items from across the 2 surveys were combined into a household score. The 12 items that comprised the index were related to attitudes towards girls' education, gender norms and aspirations for girls after completing CBE. The maximum score on the 12-item girls' education support index was 15.0.

[50] This indicator is calculated using an item on the girls' survey administered at baseline and again at midline. Girls were asked to give their level of agreement with the statement 'If I experienced abuse, I would report it'. The indicator is calculated by comparing the responses of girls at baseline and midline, and girls are counted towards the indicator if they increased their level of agreement with the statement.

in this area—these girls had missed its impact, but other participants had benefited. In FGDs, the adolescent girls who had dropped out of the project seemed afraid to report instances of sexual abuse in contrast to other respondents, who seemed confident in knowing how and willing to recognise and report abuse. In one focus group, girls expressed the concern that reporting sexual abuse could result in the perpetrator identifying the reporting girls and targeting her for sexual abuse.

4.2 Life skills

Impacting girls' life skills is a main objective of TEAM Girl Malawi. Internal project data collected between 2019 and 2021 has shown positive changes on self-confidence, a key component of life skills as defined by the project.[51] From 2019 to 2021, the internal data found a 43% growth in life skills among girls in Cohort 1. The current midline data collection and analysis aligns with the positive findings of the internal data, with the large majority of girls reporting improved life skills.

As recorded at baseline, TEAM Girl Malawi indicator O1.3—percentage of highly marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved life skills outcomes (sexual and reproductive health, self-esteem and self-confidence)—was measured by creating a composite index. The index was comprised of domains specifically related to the TEAM Girl Malawi curriculum for Girls' Clubs.

Specifically, the life skills index contained items from the following domains: attitudes towards education, self-esteem, self-confidence, child protection knowledge and attitudes, attitudes towards gender-based violence, and SRHR knowledge, attitudes and practices. Several of these indices were already used for IOs; all were used for IOs at baseline. A total of 214 girls responded to the items on the survey at the midline.

To calculate baseline levels of life skills, each girl's mean score on the life skills index was computed on a 3.00-point scale. Girls' midline scores were matched with baseline scores, and were categorised as improved, no change or negative change based on the difference between baseline and midline scores.

Main findings

Of the 214 Cohort 1 girls surveyed at midline, 83.2% showed improved life skills. Only two girls (0.93%) showed no change, and 15.9% showed a negative change on the life skills index. The proportion that shows negative change is unsurprising as girls' responses were likely highly affected by response shift bias.[52] Response shift bias occurs when a respondent's frame of reference or evaluation standard changes significantly during an intervention, frequently around behaviours, attitudes or self-reported levels of knowledge.

Two subgroups of girls did not show improvement in life skills (Table 17). Girls in Lilongwe and girls with high chore burdens had a statistically significantly higher proportion (35.0% and 22.9%, respectively) who did not show improvement in life skills than did other groups. No definitive explanation exists as to why a higher proportion of girls in Lilongwe did not show improvement in life skills; however, the population of girls in Lilongwe tend to be young, on average. Their age could potentially explain why they did not have higher

[51] For the self-confidence evaluation, TfaC conducted a participatory baseline with a sample of 144 learners across 12 CBEs in August 2019. After adapting its sample to accommodate a sample of subgroups, TfaC conducted a participatory endline with a sample of 107 learners across 12 CBEs in November 2021.

[52] Howard, G. S. (1980). Response-shift bias: A problem in evaluating interventions with pre/post self-reports. Evaluation Review, 4(1), 93–106.

improvement in life skills, as the demand for certain life skills might be higher for older girls. However, it seems likely that girls with high chore burdens would have less time to dedicate to attendance in the project, as well as to exercise their life skills overall.

Table 17: Percentage of highly marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved life skills outcomes

Category	N	Score	Proportion of total	Midline Aggregate EGRA score	Midline Aggregate EGMA score
All girls (cohort 1)	**214**	**No improvement**	**16.8%**	**38.1**	**57.4**
		Improved life skills	**83.2%**	**39.5**	**56.5**
Lilongwe	20	No improvement*	35.0%	28.6	58.8
		Improved life skills	65.0%	54.1	77.2
Dedza	118	No improvement	16.9%	42.2	56.7
		Improved life skills	83.1%	42.0	55.9
Mchinji	76	No improvement	11.8%	35.4	57.8
		Improved life skills	88.2%	33.0	53.6
Age 12-13	5	No improvement	0.0%	n/a	
		Improved life skills	100.0%	22.3	21.8
Age 14-18	44	No improvement	13.6%	17.3	43.6
		Improved life skills	86.4%	31.8	47.7
Age 19-21	118	No improvement	17.8%	36.9	56.7
		Improved life skills	82.2%	43.1	60.6
Subgroup					
Married and caregiver	43	No improvement	25.6%	49.7	66.1
		Improved life skills	74.4%	51.1	66.9
Orphaned	56	No improvement	10.7%	38.2	62.4
		Improved life skills	89.3%	47.9	64.6
Head of household	7	No improvement	28.6%	64.2	70.2
		Improved life skills	71.4%	46.3	67.1
High chore burden	96	No improvement*	22.9%	43.6	63.7
		Improved life skills	77.1%	42.7	60.0
Girls with disabilities	78	No improvement	15.4%	36.3	52.7
		Improved life skills	84.6%	35.6	51.0
Barrier					
Bullying	19	No improvement	15.8%	48.4	67.8
		Improved life skills	84.2%	12.8	27.6
School cost	188	No improvement	17.0%	38.9	58.6
		Improved life skills	83.0%	39.8	57.8

Category	N	Score	Proportion of total	Midline Aggregate EGRA score	Midline Aggregate EGMA score
Parent support	38	No improvement	21.1%	26.7	50.8
		Improved life skills	78.9%	38.5	54.3
Menstruation	64	No improvement	12.5%	51.3	67.3
		Improved life skills	87.5%	37.5	56.8
Food insecurity or hunger	136	No improvement	19.1%	41.3	59.8
		Improved life skills	80.9%	37.5	53.7
School safety	62	No improvement	22.6%	47.7	62.7
		Improved life skills	77.4%	33.8	55.9

Note: One asterisk (*) indicates the category had a statistically significantly higher proportion at p<0.05.

It is hypothesised that girls' characteristics—district, school cost, hunger, challenges around menstruation, functional difficulty, lack of parental support for education and feeling unsafe at school—may be related to girls' life skills. With this in mind, STS conducted a regression analysis to understand the relative predictive relationship of each of these factors with Cohort 1 girls' life skills. The predictor variables in this analysis were drawn from girls' survey responses, thus were self-reported. Likewise, the outcome variable—the life skills construct—was drawn from girls' survey responses.

Only two of these factors, age and reports of bullying, were found to have a statistically significant relationship with life skills (Table 18). Age was found to have a positive relationship with life skills; that is, the age of the girl was positively related to life skills. This finding seems sensible because as girls age, they are likely to both acquire and apply more life skills. Bullying was found to have a negative relationship with life skills; that is, whether a girl reported experiencing bullying was negatively related to life skills. This finding also seems sensible, as bullying may be related to low self-esteem or low confidence, two of the components of the life skills index. Notably, other factors—including district, school cost, hunger, challenges around menstruation, functional difficulty, lack of parental support for education and feeling unsafe at school—were not related to life skills at midline but were reported as factors at baseline.

Table 18: Predictors of Cohort 1 midline life skills outcomes

Category	Coefficient	Standard error	95% Confidence interval	
			Min.	Max.
Age*	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.06
Bullying*	-0.26	0.07	-0.40	-0.12
Constant[53]	1.14	0.15	1.12	1.70

Note: One asterisk (*) denotes differences between groups that are statistically significant at p < 0.05.

[53] The constant, or intercept, is the average score for the reference group. In this case, the reference group is girls who are 10 years old who do not report being bullied.

STS also ran a regression for Cohort 3 girls' life skills scores. Predictors of Cohort 3 girls' life skills at their baseline can be summarised as follows:

- Age – higher score by 0.03 points on an index for every year of age
- District – higher score by 0.43 points if in Dedza; 0.21 if in Mchinji
- School cost – lower score by 0.12 points
- Challenges around menstruation – higher score by 0.11 if a girl faces lower challenges due to menstruation
- Hunger – lower score by 0.08 if a girl reports her family is frequently hungry
- Functional Difficulty – lower score by 0.09 if the girl has a functional difficulty
- Bullying, lack of parental support for education and feeling unsafe at school were not predictors of girls' life skills scores at the midline.

See Annex 12's Table 16 on page 156 for additional information on predictors of Cohort 3's life skills outcomes.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

The evaluation explored perceptions of condom training in response to TEAM Girl Malawi's requests at the beginning of data collection. While condom training was not a specific question prompt in the qualitative data collection, respondents did speak to the subject of SRHR. The data revealed mixed perceptions among stakeholders. Many respondents view the SRHR training, including on condoms, as valuable and impactful in reducing pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. There was some clear support for the current family planning approach. One CBE facilitator felt the health personnel visits were a great idea that 'saved (the girls) from becoming pregnant, and this really needs to continue'. She described family planning as particularly effective support.

However, some negative views were shared by community members, MoEST officials, CBE facilitators and even AoCs themselves. The most common perceptions were that the training was either not age-appropriate or encouraged girls to engage in sex because they knew how to do so more safely. One AoC, who was in the role of providing SRHR training, said, 'some content is not relevant to young girls, such as topics about menstrual periods, sex and use of condoms—which make girls aged 9 to 14 uncomfortable when they hear names of parts of the genitals and how they are used'. One CBE facilitator, when asked to recommend changes to help girls learn better, even linked the TfaC's SRHR curriculum with lower learning outcomes, claiming that some children found the SRHR topic inappropriate and avoided CBE or felt disengaged from learning as a result. While the TEAM Girl Malawi project did consult extensively on the content of the SRHR curriculum and decided to divide it by age, the project might benefit from exploring if additional adjustments could be made to mitigate concerns.

5. Conclusions

This midline report presents comprehensive, mixed-method evidence on the status of outcomes and IOs for TEAM Girl Malawi Cohort 1 beneficiaries. A summary of the findings and implications for the planned interventions are included.

Learning outcomes

Midline data analyses showed that Cohort 1 girls demonstrated an overall improvement in literacy as measured by the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). The percentage of girls who improved their aggregated EGRA score between baseline and midline is 88% (Indicator 1.1).[54] The average aggregate EGRA score improved as well. At baseline, the mean score was 17.9 (out of 100), while at midline, the mean score was 38.2. These positive trends are notable, particularly considering the additional challenges participating girls might have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Midline data analyses showed that Cohort 1 girls demonstrated an overall improvement in numeracy as measured by the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA).[55] From baseline to midline, 88.1% of girls improved their aggregate numeracy score (Indicator 1.2). Also, the average aggregate EGMA score improved. At baseline, the mean aggregate score was 30.2 (out of 100). This improved to 55.1 at the midline.

Learning outcomes by subgroups showed some statistically significant differences. In Cohort 1, there were no statistically significant differences between transition groups in the proportion of girls who improved their literacy or numeracy scores. However, among Cohort 3 girls, those who plan to attend primary school had significantly lower mean EGRA and EGMA scores than did those who plan to pursue vocational training or entrepreneurship/employment.

The learning outcomes of girls in Cohort 3 cannot be attributed to the TEAM Girl Malawi Project because the assessment of Cohort 3 skills is a baseline. However, in two cohorts with similar characteristics, one would expect learning outcomes to be similar. In this case, the baseline learning outcomes of Cohort 3 were higher than those of Cohort 1. This suggests that there is a different characteristic between the two cohorts that are related to learning outcomes. The explanation for the higher average aggregated baseline learning scores for Cohort 3 compared to Cohort 1 is not fully explained by this midline analysis. However, a possible explanation is that the selection of girls to participate in Cohort 1 successfully included the most marginalised adolescent girls and that girls selected for Cohort 3 are in some ways less marginalised, resulting in higher performance scores. Program implementers report that in some ways, girls in Cohort 3 are actually more marginalised than those in Cohort 1, which might suggest that the targeting that happened at baseline was less successful. With that interpretation, it could be that higher average aggregated baseline learning scores for Cohort 3 is a result of Cohort 3 girls' ages, rather than marginalisation status. At endline, more research can be done to examine the impact of age vs. other characteristics on a variety of outcomes.

Transition outcomes

Overall, the majority of girls in Cohort 1 indicated they would pursue transition pathway B—skills or vocational training—or transition pathway C—self-employment (45.2% and 42.9%, respectively). Only 9.5% of Cohort 1 girls indicated they would re-enrol in primary school (see Table 13). Cohort 1 girls in Lilongwe were statistically significantly more likely to indicate that they would be re-enrolling into primary school than were girls in the other two districts. Girls in Dedza and Mchinji were significantly more likely to indicate self-employment than were girls in Lilongwe.

[54] The aggregated EGRA score is composed of the scores on the 7 EGRA subtasks. Each subtask is equally weighted. The possible range of scores on the aggregated EGRA is 0 to 100.

[55] As with the EGRA, the aggregated EMGA score is composed of the scores of the 8 EGMA subtask. Each subtask is equally weighted. The possible range of scores on the aggregated EMGA is 0 to 100.

Among girls in Cohort 3, similar trends appeared in their desired transition pathways. A statistically significantly higher proportion of girls aged 12–13 selected re-enrolling in primary school than did other age groups. Overall, the largest proportion of girls in Cohort 3—those who are just beginning their participation in the project—reported an intention to pursue skills or vocational training after finishing CBE in two years (49.2%) (See Table 14).

Moreover, there appears to be a trend in the selection of transition pathways by age. Younger girls more frequently selected primary school re-enrolment; older girls more frequently selected skills, vocational training, entrepreneurship or employment. This finding is sensible for younger girls, as the TEAM Girl Malawi project did not offer vocational training, entrepreneurship or employment options for participants under the age of 16. For those 16 and older—who were given an option of all three transitional pathways—it seems likely that returning to primary school at an age above that of the traditional primary school learner might not be an attractive option.

Sustainability outcomes

For this midline, sustainability is represented by the extent to which communities demonstrate ownership over improving education for girls in TEAM Girl Malawi target areas, as well as the extent to which TEAM Girl Malawi activities are embedded in CBE and MoEST and MoGCDSW processes, structure and staff capacities. Midline findings suggest that more work can be done to ensure ownership by communities and to ensure the extent to which the project's activities are embedded. Although most stakeholders have offered a general commitment to ensuring that girls can enrol in primary schools, national stakeholders appeared somewhat disengaged from the TEAM Girl Malawi project.

The National respondents interviewed, including those from the MoEST, tended to demonstrate superficial knowledge of the project, which brings into question the extent to which the MoEST could embed the project's activities into their structure or processes. Their perception, which mirrored the perception of district-level officials, was that the role of the MoEST was largely to allow TEAM Girl Malawi to function.

Community-level sustainability findings at midline highlighted several challenges. Stakeholders' knowledge of the project's activities was also somewhat limited. Also, a lack of community support—in addition to the gender norms held by community members—seemed to influence girls' transition negatively. The lack of community support is problematic in that it may not only influence girls' transition in the short term but may also challenge the sustainability of the TEAM Girl Malawi project long-term.

Promisingly, findings also suggest that community-level organisations or groups—such as Mothers Groups or village committees—seemed active in supporting the TEAM Girl Malawi project. Among these groups, it seemed more likely that they would own improving girls' education long term. These groups could be a source of momentum for greater sustainability and be instrumental in changing gender norms. The project might benefit from involving them even more deeply going forward. See Annex 14 on page 158 for additional details on sustainability as it relates to Value for Money.

6. Recommendations

This section provides recommendations to TEAM Girl Malawi and reflections for evaluating the project resulting from midline findings.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

At midline, the inputs of MoEST officials were minimal. Unless the TEAM Girl Malawi project makes an explicit effort to build awareness and improve engagement among MoEST and other national stakeholders of TEAM Girl Malawi before endline, we recommend against including them in interview or focus group respondents at the endline as their inputs are largely superficial.

TEAM Girl Malawi's research questions are broad and comprehensive, but the complex and expansive nature of the research questions may make interpretation and learning from results challenging, particularly for implementers. It is useful to collect a wide range of data (both quantitative and qualitative) on multiple subtopics and with multiple stakeholders as it reflects the complex theory of change; at the same time, programme implementers prefer to see the results presented in leaner, more targeted formats to facilitate quick application of learning from the results. For the endline evaluation, it may be worthwhile to consider analysing and reporting results in shorter reports by theme to facilitate external learning.

In addition to considering the most useful formats for dissemination of results at endline, the endline might provide an opportunity to study in greater depth some key topics raised at midline, including attendance/absenteeism, age, and disability. Given the frequently reported challenge of absenteeism raised at midline, it may be useful to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the factors influencing attendance at endline. Likewise, midline results suggest that girls' ages may play a role in influencing transition pathways and learning outcomes, among other factors. The endline analysis plan may include specific approaches to better understand the role of age. Finally, the range and variety of functional disabilities could be further explored at endline, to examine the outcomes of girls with specific disabilities.

Components of the Project

Role models seem to be an underutilised area to support enrolment, as many respondents seemed unable to imagine the outcomes of different transition pathways. Among the girls who had dropped out, the first respondent said that she does not see any benefit of persisting in education because most of the girls she has seen just stay home—they do not do anything. Another respondent said that the girls go and search for work but clarified it was likely domestic work. Indeed, a third respondent said that she has never seen anyone go up to secondary school or college in the community—clarifying that even those who attend Standard 4 or 6 stay in the community and get married. A more strategic use of role models could help shift these perceptions. Indeed, one respondent reported, 'it could have been good to have role models come to the area, organise meetings and talk to the community about the importance of marginalised girls' education'.

Role models could also help address findings indicating that girls of different ages have different expectations after CBE. Furthermore, if the project wants to increase the proportion of girls who specifically aim to return to primary school, they should focus on changing perceptions of the quality of primary education, as quality was seen as a factor in attracting girls to diverse types of schooling.

Finally, project staff should address communication to all stakeholders on the work that has already gone into ensuring alignment between the CBE and the primary school curricula, as well as its quality. This could be especially helpful for older girls, who expressed the least interest in returning to primary school after completing CBE, but also for project implementers or MoEST officials.

Additionally, TEAM Girl Malawi project staff should address the perception that entrepreneurship and vocational training is unsupported. Participants and their families likely need more clarification on the opportunities that are offered through the project for those

pursuing vocational training or entrepreneurship. Project staff should address a comment among communities that the promise of support and loans have not materialised.

Sustainability

For this midline, sustainability is represented by the extent to which communities demonstrate ownership over improving education for girls in TEAM Girl Malawi target areas, as well as the extent to which TEAM Girl Malawi activities are embedded in CBE and MoEST and MoGCDSW processes, structure and staff capacities. As it was reported that individual parents and community members remain under-engaged or somewhat unaware of TEAM Girl Malawi, more efforts could be made in socialising the project with communities to support sustainability. Implementing more frequent or a wider variety of socialisation activities could engage local stakeholders in ways that might change their behaviour in relation to their ownership of improving girls' education. This could prove particularly useful in addressing the opposition some respondents reported to certain aspects of the project, such as educating pregnant girls. TEAM Girl Malawi project staff might also consider further intensifying its community-based work with Mothers Groups and village committees specifically. Midline reports suggested these groups were some of the most invested and active community-level supporters, at least in the short term. As reported earlier in this report, internal monitoring data showed that both Mothers Groups and CP Stakeholders improved their knowledge, skills and attitudes in the area of child protection, which could bode well for sustainability.

Given that the close involvement of national MoEST seems to lag that of community members, TEAM Girl Malawi should investigate ways to strengthen connections between the MoEST and the most active community-based institutions.

3. Annexes

TEAM Midline: Project Response

Learning

The project is pleased to see that the majority of girls in cohort 1 have improved in literacy and numeracy, particularly given the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluators also found that there were no statistically significant differences between transition groups in the proportion of girls who improved their literacy or numeracy scores. This suggests the Theory of Change is robust in that the project is supporting girls of different ages to follow their chosen pathway after CBE.

We were, however, surprised to find that, despite improvement, a number of girls, across cohorts, were still struggling with foundational literacy skills. A number of potential reasons were offered from facilitators struggling to teach learners with disabilities to learner absenteeism. In response we have added 30 minutes onto the daily CBE curriculum specifically for reading and writing practice; developed a 'tips for supporting learners with disabilities' document for centre staff; and continue to address absenteeism through learner follow up and community sensitisation. The project continues to focus on continuous capacity strengthening of facilitators through monitoring and mentorship by project staff, MoE officials and National Reading Programme teachers.

We were interested to find out that cohort 3 learners had higher baseline learning outcomes than cohort 1. The evaluator was not in a position to explain this variation in the midline analysis which prompted the project to conduct detailed analysis into the differences between our cohort characteristics. This suggested that in many ways cohort 3 were more marginalised than cohort 1, but as a group were older than cohort 1. We therefore welcome the evaluator's suggestion that more research can be done to examine the impact of age vs. other characteristics on a variety of outcomes at endline.

Transition

Quantitative data collection for the midline happened prior to cohort 1 transition, which meant that the evaluators were only able to comment on learner intention rather than actual pathway enrolment. For example, the conclusion highlights that only 9.5% of girls intended to return to primary school, when the actual enrolment after project support and intervention ended up being 15%.

Transition options provided by TEAM for cohort 1 were necessarily constrained by legal age restrictions, budget and staff capacity. This meant that Vocational and Entrepreneurship training could only be offered to learners 16 and above, and no vocational training or loans access could be offered in Lilongwe. These limitations further devalued the transition analysis offered by the evaluator as many of the findings and sub-group analysis appeared self-evident, related more to availability rather than pathway choice per se. Therefore, the project does not support the evaluator's recommendation that the endline analysis should include specific approaches to understand the role of age in influencing transition pathway choice.

Having said this, we recognise and accept the challenges noted in the report around learner expectations of transition and communication with communities. We have implemented a number of adaptions based on our learning from cohort 1, including: an enhanced

communication and engagement strategy; Vocational Training offering hairdressing and barberry in addition to sewing to reflect market saturation and learner preferences; including a range of external vocational training transition providers for learners in Lilongwe; and keeping some facilitators employed by the project for 3 months after the end of CBE to support the handover of learners to transition providers. We agree with the evaluator that role models have been an underutilised area to support CBE attendance and transition enrolment and are taking steps to incorporate this element more widely within every pathway.

Sustainability

We are pleased that our efforts at community and district level appear to be making a real difference, particularly at the levels in which we invest most time and resources such as Mother Groups, Learning Centre Management Committees and district officials. We continue to build on these findings, including adding an LCMC refresher training for cohort 3 and including them in the soap distribution to ensure this important group of people feel empowered and motivated to undertake their roles. We recognise we have more to do to engage national-level stakeholders and will continue to engage in technical working groups, meetings and conferences on complementary basic education. At the next evaluation point, we will ensure that the key individuals who we partner with at national level are included in data collection so sustainability at national level is captured fully.

TEAM is reviewing our logframe following the midline results and have been considering the relevance and appropriateness of the indicators and endline targets. We will also be working with the evaluator going forward to ensure that learning from the midline data collection and report development process is incorporated into the design and implementation of the endline study.

Guiding questions *(see responses in italics)*

The project's response to the evaluation findings – in the body of the report or in an annex – that includes reflection on:

- The current Theory of Change and what might need to be revised based on current activities and evaluation evidence; *No revision needed, see comments in Learning, paragraph 1*
- The current logframe and what might need to be revised based on current activities and evaluation evidence; *We are in the process of upgrading our logframe, in response to ML evaluation (with actuals) and also targets for Endline*
- Whether girls are reaching the expected learning levels based on the project's design and intended outcomes, and why or why not; *See comments relating to disability and absenteeism in 'learning' above*
- Reasons for any differential results by disability status, subgroup and barrier, including whether exposure (compliance) to the project was similar or dissimilar across subgroups;
- Programmatic changes that might be made based on the evaluation evidence – *see paragraph 2 in 'Learning' above, and paragraph 3 in 'Transition'*